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R. A. Falconer. May 1907.

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# THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY

LONDON LECTURES

BY

PERCY GARDNER, Litt.D., LL.D.

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ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

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## PREFACE

THESE lectures were begun in 1903, when the rector of a London parish invited me to give a course of lectures in his church on the relations of Christianity to early culture. They were never delivered, owing to reasons which it is unnecessary to relate. Having begun to write the lectures, I decided to complete them for publication, preserving for convenience the lecture form. And in fact, so wide is the ground covered, and so many the subjects at which it is necessary to glance, that one could scarcely venture to deal with the subject save in the tentative form of lectures, the object of which is rather to interest and stimulate than to inform or satisfy. A necessary consequence of the brevity of this sketch is its optimism in leaving out much of the shadow: outlines are not shaded.

Having written so much by way of preface, I might very well stop. But I have found by experience that so many readers judge of a book by the preface, and so many reviewers scarcely go beyond it, that I may be allowed briefly to state the point of view maintained in this work. It is not a mere outline of the early history of Christianity, but a treatise dominated by a point of view deliberately adopted—in fact an apologetic treatise. I have aimed at impartiality, and loved the

white light as much as man can. But in dealing with history, a writer can no more secure perfect impartiality than perfect knowledge. Everyone must read the records of the past in the light of formed moral tendencies and intellectual views. And my chief reason for publishing is that I know of comparatively few works which show at once a strong belief in spiritual, as distinct from what I should call materialized, Christianity, and an acceptance of evolutionary views of the history of the Christian society. I write as a member of the school of Jowett and Arnold, of Maurice and Stanley, not, however, uninfluenced by the philosophic and historic developments of the last half century. I regard Christianity as the supreme religious phenomenon, but one by no means standing apart from the general course of European development, but influenced by it and in turn dominating it.

The increasing pressure of university duties has delayed the publication of these pages, and prevented me from pursuing my reading in various directions so far as I could have wished. I had hoped also to speak of the relations between Christianity and culture in our own times. But this subject I have been obliged to lay aside, in the hope of a time of greater leisure hereafter. The detailed table of contents may serve as an index. I wish to thank my sister, Miss Alice Gardner, for helping me with several useful suggestions.

P. GARDNER.

OXFORD, *March* 1907.

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# THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY

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## LECTURE I

### THE GERM OF CHRISTIANITY

I HAVE been asked to lay before a London audience—consisting, I suppose, largely of men of business who have intellectual interests, and of students of various kinds—an outline of what I conceive to be the relations between Christianity and the various kinds of thought and belief with which it has come in contact. Our modern culture is a much compounded thing, with roots reaching back not only to Judæa but to Greece and Rome and the far East, as well as to the hills of Wales and the forests of Germany. It is important to see how far this civilization of ours is really Christian, how far it may be Christianized, which of its elements have never been much affected by Christianity.

Our subject, in short, is the relations between Christianity and Culture. In the present course of

lectures I shall deal with the past, down to the time of the Reformation, not neglecting to exhibit any light which the past history of Christianity may reflect upon modern needs and present problems. The subject is vast, perhaps too vast; it is clear that I can but open up the ground a little, and make a few suggestions.

## I

When we read the lives of those men and women who have by their contemporaries or successors been regarded as saints, men and women in whom the flame of the higher life has burned with an intense glow, we often find that the whole tone of those lives was indelibly set by some noteworthy event, either of outward life or of inner experience. At a point of time which can be discerned, their whole being was lifted by divine grace to a higher level, and, to the end, the echoes which the calling of a divine Providence aroused in their souls have never wholly died away. They have had relapses, times of torpor and coldness, times of yielding to temptation, times of isolation and of the valley of the shadow of death; and yet, on looking back, they have said that since the great time of their calling they have always lived in greater nearness to God, as citizens of a spiritual world, as conscious of a higher purpose in life.

Such, then, is not uncommonly the testimony of Christians of more than usual insight and devotion. The lives of nations show similar crises. Such a time of spiritual awakening, of a calling to higher destinies, came upon the world, the civilized world which lay



around the Mediterranean Sea, at the beginning of our era. The calling was concentrated in the life and the death of the Founder of Christianity. In Him, and in Him alone, was the consecration of mankind consciously accomplished. He, and He alone, is the captain of our salvation.

Yet before enlarging on this truth, I may pause for a moment—I am as a historian bound to pause—to point out that though the purification of the world by the spirit of Jesus Christ was an unique event in the history of mankind, yet it was by no means an isolated event, or one without parallel. Before the rise of Christianity there had been times when a large outpouring of the divine spirit had taken place. For example, the marvellous sixth century before our era had been marked, in Asia, by the rise of the civilizing Persian empire, by the return of the Jews to their own country, the establishment of the Jewish theocracy, and the prophecies of the later Isaiah, by the origin and spread of Buddhism in India, and the teaching in China of the great Confucius. In Europe it had been marked by the sudden blossoming, among the most gifted of nations, the Greeks, of poetry and art, of philosophy and history. Such times remind us of the verse of Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.’ In a short period the human race made a greater advance than in previous millennia. So also the beginning of our era, quite apart from the rise of Christianity, was a time of general stirring in all the higher fields of human activity; the age of Cæsar and of Virgil, of the consolidation of the Roman govern-

ment and the revival of decaying religion both east and west, of the growth of a splendid literature.

God, as St Paul says, has in no age left Himself without witnesses. Christ, as Justin the Martyr insists, was born from the foundation of the world. Every good gift, as St James says, is from above. At all times both before and after the founding of Christianity, and in all regions, men have arisen inspired and sent by God to redeem their brethren from sin and from suffering, and to lead them in the way of peace. And whatever movement makes men wiser and more urbane, or increases the security and sweetness of domestic life, or brings higher ideals before the minds of statesmen and men of action, or enriches the imagination and gives us works of imperishable art, is a religious movement, and is akin, though sometimes but distantly akin, to that greatest of all religious movements, Christianity.

But I must return to my theme. It is of Christianity that I have to speak, it is the historic working of the spirit of Jesus Christ which I have to trace, however slightly and imperfectly. Of other religions I shall speak only so far as they have come into contact with Christianity; and of other movements of the human spirit I shall only speak so far as they can be brought into relations with the spirit of Christ. My theme is not merely religion and culture, but Christianity and culture.

That which the sixth century is in the history of the ancient world, that which conversion has been to men like Paul and Augustine, Luther and Bunyan, that was the coming of Christianity to the human

race. It was a sudden outpouring of the spirit of God through a consecrated channel, an opening of the doors of the spiritual world by the power of a visible life. It is the turning-point in the growth of the human spirit. And we have to inquire what is the essence of this great expansion, this divine revelation.

## II

Where can we hope to find a clear expression of the essential spirit of Christianity, save in the words of the Founder? And in which of His sayings are we so likely to find that expression as in that wonderful prayer<sup>1</sup> which He gave as an everlasting possession to His disciples, and which has almost ever since been uttered day by day by thousands or millions of Christians? We cannot be wrong in thinking that in the Lord's Prayer we shall find a key alike to the earthly life of the Founder and to the splendid career of the society which He founded. It matters little that, as Dr Lightfoot showed, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are to be found in the Jewish liturgies. The important point is that the Founder of Christianity selected these petitions for the use of His disciples, and thus made them, so to speak, the daily bread of the Christian life.

The Lord's Prayer is not only the central document of Christianity, but also, although not found in the Gospel of Mark, one of the most authentic utterances of its Founder. How could the disciples have

<sup>1</sup> Whether we regard the longer form, given in Matthew, or the shorter, given in Luke, as more authentic, matters little to the present purpose.

forgotten or greatly altered these few brief sentences, probably uttered not once only, but over and over again on many occasions? If some parts of the teaching of Jesus, as reported by the Synoptists, are coloured with the light of a later age and altered to meet the changing surroundings of Christianity, in this case there is nothing which raises a suspicion of later interpretation. We feel ourselves here, to use a common expression, standing on the bed-rock of Christianity, and any construction reared on this as a foundation may despise the buffetings of wind and water, and will remain a permanent abode of the Christian spirit.

The Lord's Prayer is sufficiently familiar to all the world. But not everyone may have noticed its remarkable and balanced construction, which is like that of a growing flower or a pediment by a Greek sculptor. In the midst of the prayer stands that petition for daily bread, which seems to bring the formula within the reach of ordinary men, who are obliged to eat that they may exist, and cannot live to God save on a basis of physical nutriment. 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' yet without bread he cannot receive the words which come from the mouth of God.

On either side of this central point stands a group of sentences which repeat in more than one form a great truth of the Christian faith. The petition which precedes asks that the Kingdom of God may come and His will be done on earth. The petition which follows begs for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from the power of evil. And in fact these two prayers are closely connected together. They bring before us

life as a struggle against what is evil and a striving towards what is good, a striving which makes up the sum of man's duty, and in which he is hindered by spiritual foes and in constant need of the divine aid. The world is regarded, in accordance with the fundamental ideas of the later religion of Israel, as a battle-field between the powers of good and the powers of evil, in which every man and every community takes a side. Sin is set forth as a terrible reality; and there must be forgiveness of sins as a first step in the better path. But even when sin is forgiven, the struggle still goes on. Without the help of God man would be carried away by the spiritual powers which tend to evil. Yet without the conscious help of man, the purposes of God in the world could never be carried out.

The whole stress of the prayer, its spiritual passion, is concentrated on a single aspiration. Thrice in so short a formula we meet the same thought, in a three-fold expression, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. So possessed is Jesus by a passionate love and adoration of the divine will, that its doing in the world is set forth as the first, the second, the third of all objects of prayer; all other petitions and aspirations live only in its shadow, and seem to be things comparatively indifferent. But a special turn is given to the threefold cry for the realization in the human world of the will of God by the opening words 'Our Father,' implying a kindly and loving attitude in the hearer of prayer, and an unfailing confidence and trust in the utterer of prayer.

Thus it is affirmed in the most authentic, the central, document of Christianity, that God may be approached by man, and approached in a spirit of trustful reliance. It is affirmed that the essence of all goodness, the secret of all progress in the world lies in the doing of God's will, the spread of a spiritual kingdom among men. And it is almost superfluous to point out that the life of Jesus as recorded for us in the Synoptic Gospels is wholly set in this key: 'Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother'; 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done'; 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.' And in the Fourth Gospel, which, if less historic, is not less Christian than the others, the same note is repeatedly struck: 'I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me'; 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.' Some of these sayings may not have been uttered by Jesus quite in the form in which they come to us; but it would be a most unreasonable scepticism which would doubt that such words were often on the lips of our Founder. But they were not, as we all know, mere words, but rather the rendering in language of a practical purpose, of an unswerving devotion which ran like a golden thread through the whole life which ended, or rather which passed through its supreme crisis, on Calvary.



## III

The phrase 'The will of God be done' has often been used by eminent Christians in the face of persecution or death. They have been speaking in the mood of the garden of Gethsemane, determined to set aside their own hopes and fears, and to merge all personal feeling in the consciousness of a larger life. They have been right. And yet submission to the will of God is but one, and not the highest form of veneration of the divine will. When one's forces are at an end, or when one has fallen into the hands of bitter foes, then indeed it is the noblest of virtues. But Jesus constantly speaks, not only of submission to the divine will, but of co-operation with it, as the chief end and purpose of life. It was to *do* rather than to suffer the will of God that Himself came into the world. And His followers are to be judged, not by their protestations, but by the degree of devotedness with which they carry out the mission confided to each. Such parables as that of the talents clearly lay down that man has it in his power either to forward, or in some degree to frustrate, the divine will; and that, accordingly as he forwards or frustrates it, is the final doom of his soul. Active service so long as any strength remains, willing submission when our forces are at an end: such is to be our relation to the eternal purposes of God.

Let us a little further analyze the Founder's teaching in this matter. Our faculties make up three groups: those of knowing, of feeling, and of willing. How does the teaching of Jesus connect each of these

groups with the divine will? I have mentioned them in the order in which they are ranged in the works of psychologists and philosophers. But that is not the religious order. In the Synoptic Gospels the faculties of feeling and of willing are scarcely separated; while the faculties of knowing are treated last, and put in a subordinate position.

Though to do the will of God be man's whole duty, his main purpose in life, yet he could not in any degree accomplish it unless in the first place there were springing up within him a well of love to God. Jesus spoke of it as the secret of eternal life to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength: this, He declared, was the great commandment. It may seem strange that this passage should stand somewhat isolated, and that the teaching of love to God should not take in the Gospels anything like the place which it takes in the *Theologia Germanica*, and other works of the mystics. But though not frequently expressed, it underlies every page. The life of Jesus was such a practical demonstration of love to God that words were unnecessary. And in quoting the phrase of *Deuteronomy* as to the love of God, Jesus put Himself into line with His nation, with whom the love of God was the principle, the condition of existence. And as it is impossible in the world to love a person in any worthy way without finding delight in trying to please him, so it is not possible to love God without desiring to do His will in the world. Love is the great spring of will and action. When a feeling burns in the heart, it drives a man to will and to do that which will give it a vent.

And on the other hand, as has often been pointed out, there is no more certain stimulus of love than the attempt to give happiness to relative or friend. So, too, in religion. In the few, love to God may be an overpowering mystic passion; in the many, it arises more slowly out of daily endeavour to promote the divine Kingdom in the world. By adhering to the path of duty many a man by degrees attains to a love of God of which perhaps he is scarcely conscious and which he would not call by that name, yet which is in reality strong enough to lightly overcome temptation, and to make the progress of the divine will in the world a source of constant though sober happiness.

If we search the Gospels for reasons why we should love God and do His will, we shall not find them stated very explicitly. But implicitly two grounds of love are implied. In the first place, gratitude to God who gives us all good, who counts the hairs of our heads, and has perfect knowledge of all our needs, is spoken of as natural to man. And above all other gifts, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the most divine of all divine favours, is cited as that which must, if we have a sense of gratitude, call it into activity. A further reason frequently urged for loving God is that it leads to blessedness. Men naturally feel love to those from whom they have received, or expect to receive, happiness. And there is no more pure or perennial source of happiness than comes from loving what is worthy of love, and being in harmony with the life of God.

In the Synoptic Gospels, beside the motive of love is sometimes placed that of fear. In the early Church

the hope of reward beyond the grave and the fear of eternal punishment acted very strongly as a balance against the seductions and the terrors of a world which was opposed to it. The teaching of heaven and hell, which had its origin, so far as we know, to the east of the Mediterranean, occupied a prominent place in the thoughts, hopes, and passions of the disciples. But in the Gospels this teaching is far less dominant. In a few passages the fate of the soul for good or for evil is spoken of, briefly but with great solemnity. But in the great mass of the teaching of Jesus, it is the present life, not that beyond the grave, which is the subject of discourse. The life of obedience to God is represented as in itself blessed, and so consonant to the true nature of men that it leads inevitably to what is good, and away from all that defiles and degrades. The pressure which the original Christian teaching puts upon man to lead him to deny his worse nature and follow what is better is a pressure of attraction, not one of hard compulsion or of craven fear. 'That ye may be the children of your Father in Heaven' is the high motive for which a man should study the will of God as revealed in the world, and further it in the lives of men.

It may be said that our Lord not only preached the doctrine of obedience to the divine will, but also revealed to His followers what that will was in the various affairs of life. And in this saying there would, of course, be some truth. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, there is a certain amount of legislation binding on all members of the Christian society, though some parts of that legislation were

only adapted to the present condition of the infant society, and unfit to be the law of churches or of nations. In regard to prayer and fasting, in relation to our duties to our neighbours, general rules are laid down. And in one or two matters, notably the relations of husband and wife, definite principles are set forth with authority. Yet everyone must feel that the legislation in regard to conduct in the Gospels, luminous and suggestive as it is, covers but a small part of the active life of men as citizens. In the main, it is the great principle of obedience to the divine will, with a few of its immediate corollaries, which is set forth, and the application is left to the future and to the experience of life.

A learned Mohammedan has made it a reproach to Christianity, in a paper recently printed in the *Hibbert Journal*, that there is not in the Gospels anything like such a code of regulations as is set forth in the Mosaic writings or in the Koran. The writer thinks this a great defect; and it cannot be denied that it makes Christianity less suited to backward and fleshly races. Christianity, in fact, differs from all the systems of code and authority by insisting on the inwardness of true religion, on the spirituality of the spring of actions. It insists on looking at man in the light of the ideal, and regarding not what men are, but what they might be or ought to be. Thus it lays upon the conscience and intelligence of Christians a heavy burden, the duty of searching out, by all indications of history, of reason, and of experience, to what the will of God as revealed in the world really points. I do not, of course, mean that this burden is laid on every man individually;

but it is laid on men in nations, in societies, in churches, and on men of religious power and insight individually.

#### IV

It is surprising how small are the intellectual assumptions of such documents as the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount. Yet even in these most simple documents there is a certain amount of intellectual postulate. It is indeed impossible to use human language in regard to the divine basis of life, or even to think of it, without some vestiges of what may be called doctrine. Without some simple mental framework, the essence of Christianity could not be held together or taught to the disciples.

I have indeed already mentioned what may be regarded as the two great intellectual postulates of primitive Christianity: first, that God is the Father in Heaven; second, that His will may be done on earth. It is very difficult to us in modern days, accustomed to the constructions of successive generations of Christian theologians, to go back to the original meaning of these simple phrases. They have been worked into many schemes of doctrine, which, if we would find their original essential meaning, we must try to dismiss from our minds. At least, it will be said, they lay down clearly the personality of God. Ah, no! the word personality is one of those fundamental words of philosophy which are crowded with the meaning forced into them by successive schools of thought. One cannot discuss it save in volumes. The word personality would have been unintelligible to those who



wrote the books of the New Testament. The Fourth Evangelist puts into the mouth of Jesus the phrase, 'God is spirit'; but it seems likely that even that phrase belongs to another plane of thought from that of the Founder of Christianity, since we do not find such phrases in the Synoptists.

No; the two phrases of the 'Father in Heaven,' and the 'Will of God' seem to be the rendering, in the language of our common humanity, almost of childhood, of the simplest facts of the religious consciousness: the fact of the constant working of the divine power in human hearts, while those hearts can side either with or against that divine power, and the fact that obedience to the divine power leads men to blessedness, while disobedience leads them to misery and shame. If these be indeed facts, it is impossible to express them in language which conveys less of theory, which less needs adapting to the intellectual conditions of various ages. If, for a moment, such phrases as 'Father in Heaven,' 'Thy will be done,' seem archaic, yet no phrases, however modern and technical, could better contain the real facts. Our philosophers and theologians cannot, of course, be content with anything so simple. But they seem to me often to bring in more difficulties than they remove. The personality of God! The divine working in our consciousness often seems to us personal, but with a personality as much wider than ours as a cube is greater than a point. We may attribute personality to God if we please, but it is throwing out words at what is far too vast to be enclosed by words. And if the term personality be taken as a counter in a logical game, we may easily be

led by it into utter absurdities. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

Has not St Augustine, the great founder of Church doctrine, warned us, in memorable words, of the danger of applying human categories to the divine? 'Some men,' he says, 'frame whatever idea they have of God after the pattern of the nature and affections of the human mind: and through this error, in disputing concerning God, they argue by distorted and fallacious rules.' Affirmations in regard to the divine nature cannot be taken literally; they are symbolic, helps to feeling and imagination rather than fit to serve as the basis of argument.

## V

What, then, is implied in the Christian way of regarding the supreme claims of the will of God in the world? In order that God's will may be done on earth, it is necessary, first, that the surroundings of man should be made subordinate to man himself, to that which is reasonable, active, conscious. The visible world must be read in terms of humanity. Man must be seen as 'the roof and crown of things,' the being for whom the world was made, and whose welfare is the supreme end of creation. And then, when the world is chiefly regarded as the condition of human life and as mirrored in the human spirit, we may pass to the second of the two processes of which I am speaking, the subordination of man to God, of

personality to divine purpose, of human desire and natural pleasure to the claims of the ideal.

Even the phenomena of the visible world, when illumined with the light of the spirit, change their character. They remain, it is true, the realm of unvarying law and order. But beneath the material surface one sees the working of ideas, transfiguring it with beauty and with purpose. To the eye of the poet or the artist, nature becomes full of beauty and charm, so that his spirit is kindled to admiration and love, and he spends his life in trying to set before others what he himself discerns of underlying loveliness. In every healthy man there is some touch of the artist, so that the face of nature is a source of ever-springing delight to him, and the joy in life which plants and animals show finds a profound echo in his heart. To the sterner moralist the beauty of the world is less impressive than the opportunities which it offers of reaching through the visible to the invisible, through the material to the spiritual. He finds purpose where a superficial observation might discover only sequence. He reads the world in the light of moral possibilities, and it becomes the field and the condition of moral progress. Thus is nature read in the light of humanity, and humanity is regarded as a revelation of the will of God.

In the teaching of the Gospels the human view of nature and the divine view of man are alike conspicuous. There is in it not a little even of the pastoral love of nature, the enjoyment of the life of the open air; but, of course, there is far more of an ethical interpretation of man's surroundings, whereby, as in

historical paintings, men and their doings are placed in the foreground, and nature only fills the background. 'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.' We have indeed here that inwardness which Matthew Arnold set forth as the main principle of the method of Jesus. As He looked on the world, outer things melted away and the human spirit appeared beneath; and everything was estimated in relation to the worth of man. It was the Founder of Christianity who set that value on the individual soul which has persistently been in all ages one of the most fully recognised principles of Christian thought and action.

But when He had insisted upon the transcendent importance of the human spirit in relation to its material possessions and surroundings, Jesus went on to teach that in the spiritual world things were otherwise. As the individual is of infinitely greater value than what is material, so he shrinks into nothingness in the presence of the Father of Spirits, in a right relation towards whom alone consists the dignity and the safety of man. 'If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee': better any self-maiming or self-cramping than a wrong attitude in relation to God. 'Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.'

The Christian teaching, then, lies mainly in the two theses: Man the end and crown of the natural

world; God the end and ruler of man. And in regard both to man and to God, Jesus had a teaching which, if not altogether new to the world, yet profoundly modified and transformed the existing ways of thought both in philosophy and in religion.

In regard to man He taught the primacy of will and purpose over thought, that obedience was the organ of spiritual knowledge, that the rightness of the heart was the thing acceptable to God, that men were to be judged by the intention rather than the result of their actions.

And the whole of His life and doctrine was a new revelation of God. He spoke of God as loving men and willing their salvation, as giving the Holy Spirit to those that asked, as the source of life and happiness to mankind.

These views have, in all the history of Christianity, served to transmute and ennoble the beliefs with which they came in contact. They are the leaven which worked in the world until the whole was in some degree leavened. They are the mustard seed which grew into a tree, under the branches of which the nations of the earth found shelter.

As mere philosophic theses, as contributions to the understanding of the world, these views might have gained disciples, but would not have prepared martyrs; they might have produced a school like that of Zeno or Plotinus, but they would not have conquered the world. It was the spiritual passion which went with these views which built up the Christian society, and, through it, the world of modern Europe.

If the principle of Christianity had been at variance

with the facts of human nature, it could not have stood the test of life. Any edifice built on falsehood and misunderstanding must in the end collapse. Christianity had to make its way under certain conditions, and unless it was suited to those conditions it must fail. Its scientific and philosophic value would not have sufficed, unless it had interpreted the realities of life in a really practical and effective way.

## VI

To think, to feel, to will, these three strands make up the cord of human life. In the same way, to discern the will of God, to love the will of God, to do the will of God, makes up the essence of the religion of Christ. But, it may be said, have we here any note of distinction? Have not other religions also been founded on the same basis? To which I would reply: Yes, to some extent, but never, so far as my knowledge goes, completely. Stoicism and Islam have taught, in very different ways, a cheerful submission to the divine will. Buddhism has taught, in a supreme degree, the renunciation of self-will; but Buddhism knows nothing of the Father in heaven. The nearest approach to the Christian position is made by the later religion of Israel, as it was working, under divine control, towards a wider faith, and setting aside the narrowness of a mere tribal consecration, the religion of the Psalms and of some of the Jewish Apocrypha. But even here we find approach and not attainment.

But even if the attitude of the Christian faith towards the divine will had been fully anticipated



by the religious consciousness of an earlier time, there would yet be something wanting. Christianity is at bottom not a creed but a life, not a body of doctrine but an inspiration. And the source of this inspiration is the life both past and present of the Founder. Historically, the past life is known to us but imperfectly; it can be known as a matter of science only to those who approach it by the way of careful historic study. But the stream which has flowed from that source comes down from the regions where the foot of man cannot easily tread, and reaches the plain where all may see it and drink of it. If we regard the Church not primarily as an organized and visible institution, but as a spiritual underlying power, then we may say that the inspiration of the Church is continuous, and under all its various outward manifestations is one from the day when the Founder accepted His first disciple down to the present, and on into the unknown future.

The facts of human nature which lie at the root of Christianity are always with us. But they are not always equally with us, nor are they equally prominent in all men. Had they been so, Christianity would have taken a very different form. Men are in very various degrees susceptible of the divine inspiration. Some men seem to be almost void of the potentiality, and those who have it find it very hard to live at the level of their best thoughts and noblest aspirations. It is this fact which made the self-sacrifice of the Founder of Christianity and the continued existence of the Church which He founded necessary to humanity. The inspiration of the

Founder was unique; His life and His death were unique; and the whole history of Christianity is the story of an attempt to live up to an example once set by the aid of a spiritual force which came into the world with the Founder of Christianity, and has been working, sometimes with greater and sometimes with less intensity, from that day to this.

## LECTURE II

### BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

THAT the Founder of Christianity directed His mission to the Jews almost exclusively, and that on various occasions He expressed unwillingness to extend it beyond the limits of that nationality, is quite clear. And at first this fact may be disconcerting. We, for example, are Gentiles; can we think that our Saviour would have felt in regard to us as He is reported to have felt towards the Syro-Phœnician woman? 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.' This difficulty can be satisfactorily met if we consider the earthly mission of our Lord as in time and place strictly limited. He belonged to a race and to a family as certainly as He belonged to a particular time in the history of the world and to a particular country. But these limitations do not affect the germ of the teaching and work of the Master, which goes down beyond the distinctions of family and race, of land and of period, to the roots of the nature of man

as man, and to those relations between man and God which belong to all time.

But how was this secret, this essential mystery of Christianity, to be brought to bear upon the world? How was this golden thread to be woven into the future history of mankind?

## I

If I may venture to repeat the comparisons which were used by the Founder Himself, I would say that in the life of Jesus Christ the mustard seed was planted, but it had yet to adapt itself to soil and climate; the leaven was added to the meal, but it had yet to bring its modifying force to bear upon its surroundings. The first disciples may well have felt that they had found salvation, that their feet were on the narrow path, and they had but to follow in the steps of their Master to attain to eternal life. But there remained the vast problem, which, perhaps, few of them ventured consciously to attack: how Christ was to be the life, not only of the group of disciples, but of the whole world around them. It was this translation of personal salvation into a world-wide religion, this pouring of the breath of revelation into the great complex of human society which was the work of the last half of the first century. And it was a work accomplished, not by the wisdom of man, but by the power of God, working through the spirit of Christ.

I propose, however briefly and imperfectly, to trace the main lines of the process by which the germ of Christianity grew into a great tree, the leaven of

Christianity leavened the western world. That the tree is not in all respects like the germ, and that the leavened mass contains much besides the leaven, is no proof of want of continuity. The vital principle in all growth is not conspicuous; it is judged by its working. But if it goes on from first to last in a continuous though varied career of conquest and absorption, we have a right to treat it as a real and objective force.

The history of the Church is a continuation of the life of Christ; its victory over the world is a continuation of His victory. He had laid it down as one of the cardinal points of His teaching that obedience is the road of spiritual progress. By listening to the voice of God one becomes aware of His purposes in the world. First the will is stimulated, and then the eyes of the intellect are enlightened to see what is in accordance with the will of God and what is opposed to it. The same gospel of spiritual loyalty, the same devotion to the divine will is constantly present in the writings of all the leaders of the early Church. In many ways they add to or deviate from the teaching of the Master; but in this, the cardinal point of all, they continue without a turn or an interruption the line which He had traced. As the shoot issues from the germ, so it grows.

It is scarcely necessary that I should cite passages from the Pauline epistles, in which the doctrine of the divine will is set forth. I will but glance at two or three. 'As the servants of Christ,' Paul writes, 'doing the will of God from the heart.' And again, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.'

In another place he speaks of the knowledge of God's will thus: 'Be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.' In one of the speeches reported as Paul's in *Acts*, he says that Ananias at Damascus addressed him thus: 'The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will.'

And beside these phrases which belong to St Paul, or at all events to his immediate disciples, we may set the words of other early teachers of the church. In 1 Peter we read: 'So is the will of God that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' And the Johannine writer has a memorable sentence in his own style: 'He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' We may venture to say that there is no phrase so completely wrought into the foundations of Christian teaching as this phrase, will (*thelêma*) of God.

This is in exact accord with the teaching of the Founder, as set forth in the Synoptic Gospels. But the Church at once added another element to this, an element which could not be added while He was alive, which implied a spiritual nearness but a bodily separation. This element is faith in Christ. On this faith the society relied in its conflict with the world, and by it the world was overcome. The Church recognized her Lord as not only a Founder, a Teacher, and an Inspirer in the past, but as the present Word or Son of God, the channel by which divine grace came into the heart of the believer, a revealer to mankind of the Father of whom Jesus had in His lifetime continually spoken. It is as if the risen Christ had continually addressed to His Church



the exhortation, 'Do the will of God,' and the Church had as continually replied, 'Without Thee we can do nothing.'

From the first, Christ and His Church have lived together; the Church has been inspired by her Founder and continued on earth His divine obedience. She has been well aware that her strength did not come from herself. From St Paul downward the great Christians have said: 'Not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And from time to time there have arisen great leaders in the Church in whom some side of the Founder seemed to live again. There has been a great stream of life and influence flowing on in the spiritual world parallel to the life of the Christian community. Sometimes the barriers between the heavenly kingdom and the earthly Church have been almost impervious; sometimes they have been less thick. But ever, through chosen personalities and great movements, there has been maintained some relation between the two. Prayer and the Christian Communion have ever remained as lines of connection between the seen and the unseen.

If we turn to the records of the life of the Church, and especially of the early Church, though we may find very much of human weakness and folly, we shall yet see reason to think that there is apparent in it divine leading and help. That the Church itself did not perish in the terrible days that ended with the fall of Jerusalem, was among the earliest proofs of divine aid. Again, the more one studies the Gospels, the more one is amazed, not at their historic accuracy, but at their power of inspiration. The career of St Paul is

wonderful, and it is most wonderful that so mighty and original a genius did not break the Church asunder, but only widened it. The sudden spread of Christianity can only be accounted for by the working of mighty spiritual power in conjunction with the missionaries; and since the early days, however the light of the Church has died down, it has ever revived in new forms and fresh organizations.

The exact way in which this spiritual power has worked, the nature of the relations between the Founder and the Church, has been one of the chief subjects of thought and one of the main sources of doctrine in all Christian history. It would take me too far if I began to comment upon it here. I must be content to affirm the presence of Christ in the Church in all ages as the source of her life.

But the growth of the Church, though the power was from within, was not a growth like that of the butterfly from the chrysalis. She did not develop in isolation, nor merely expand her earliest beliefs. From the first she had to devote her energies to absorbing and assimilating whatever was suited to her in the world around, in order to transmute its character by a translation into the life of faith and obedience. Some elements in the world could readily be thus transmuted—seemed already on the way to Christianity. Some elements seemed opposed in spirit, and the natural objects of the enmity of the Church. Other elements she failed to transmute, though they might well have borne the translation, because of her lack of faith, because her loyalty was wavering. And sometimes, alas! what the Church absorbed, she made, through narrowness and

the spirit of bigotry, rather worse than better. This was no consequence of loyalty to her Master, but of the debasement which His spirit so often underwent amid human surroundings. But the story of the Church is not yet ended. The faults which in the past she may have committed are not yet past expiation. The spirit of Christ yet works, and may even now distil gold from what seems to be worthless dross.

If the analysis which I have attempted of the germ and the root principles of the tendency and the teaching of the Founder of Christianity be correct, then in the history of the Church, so far as it is Christian and in line with the Founder, we shall find the working of one and another of these principles. And as the various faiths and systems with which Christianity has had to do have been, from the Christian point of view, defective in various ways, we shall expect to find them Christianized, sometimes by a truer and more worthy way of regarding man, sometimes by altering and raising the view taken in such religions of the nature of God. But we can scarcely expect of any of them that they will be entirely transformed, so as to become vehicles perfectly adapted to embody the Christian spirit. All of them belong to their respective times, embody the spirit of their times, and meet the special needs of their times. Much of what the Christian Church took in from rival faiths was very imperfectly adapted to the new life.

I shall speak of the process by which Christian ideas conquered the world about them as a kind of baptism.

## II

The great initiatory rite, which occupied in early Christianity a place which we can scarcely realize, is baptism. Baptism was the door through which the Christian fold was entered; the line which existed between the baptized and the unbaptized separated sheep from goats. It is therefore the more remarkable that the origins of Christian baptism cannot, from a historical point of view, be satisfactorily traced. The Synoptic Evangelists mention baptism as an institution introduced by John the Baptist, but they never speak of it as a custom of the band of Christian disciples who followed their Master in His journeys in Judæa and Galilee. Had it been a custom they could scarcely have failed to mention it. For example, near the beginning of the first two Gospels we find an account of the calling of the chief apostles, Simon and Andrew, James and John; but not a word is said as to their baptism. It is true that we are told in the Fourth Gospel that though Jesus Himself did not baptize, His disciples did so. But this Gospel, in spite of its wonderful inspiration, obviously does not lie so near to historic fact as do the others. It seems more than likely that the Evangelist has in this, as in other cases, carried back to the lifetime of the Founder a custom established in the early Church. The last two verses of the Gospel of Matthew contain a direction from the risen Christ to preach among all nations, baptizing them in the name of the divine Trinity. But this verse, as some critics have long seen, is almost certainly an interpolation of a later time, for in the book of

*Acts* baptism is always into the name of Jesus Christ, not into that of the Trinity. Is it possible that the first disciples should have gone on baptizing only in the name of their Master, when He had Himself solemnly required them to do otherwise? It seems, then, according to historic probability, that the great rite of early Christianity, baptism into the name of Christ, was introduced into the society soon after the death of the Founder, why and when we cannot hope to ascertain, and that baptism into the Trinity is later still.

But however the rite of baptism arose, no reader of early Christian history can doubt of its importance in apostolic times. It was administered on a declaration of belief in Jesus as Christ, and it was often accompanied, as we are told in *Acts*, by a great religious exaltation, sometimes preceding and sometimes following the rite, and manifesting itself in joy, in enthusiasm, and in the strange expressions of emotion, such as speaking in tongues, which have in many ages and many places accompanied religious revivals.

The phenomena of religious conversion have been in recent years carefully studied by able psychologists, such as James, Granger and Starbuck. The facts discovered by these and other trained scientific observers strongly confirm the teaching of the Bible and the Church on the subject, if we clear that teaching from temporary and unessential elements. They show that religious conversion is a regular process which may be put in line with many other facts of human nature, and is at once natural and supernatural, real experience, but experience outside the line of

ordinary daily growth and development. They show that the results of religious conversion are often permanent; that it is a real crisis in the life, which may afterwards proceed at a higher and more spiritual level. But they do not show—and here surely they agree with the experience of all who have given attention to the matter—that religious awakening and conversion entirely break the thread of the life, change the mental powers and the inherited moral characteristics, or suddenly alter the nature of man or woman. Spiritual awakening may put a stop to vices long indulged, may mark the beginning of a total renovation of heart, may even let into the intellect the light of a purer day; but under all the new conditions, beneath the fresh consecration, the old powers, qualities, traits of mind and of character still work, though they work to nobler ends.

It is among the most marked features of the modern historic spirit that it is set upon interpreting the records of the past by the experiences of present life. What we see going on around us enables us to reconstruct the past to our imaginations. We are sure that the essential facts of human nature are the same in all ages, that forces which work to-day worked in the past also, though amid very different intellectual and moral conditions. Unless this is the case, history is a mere dead heap of records, without bearing on the future, without interest in the present. As science will no longer allow catastrophes in the physical evolution of the earth, so history will no longer allow moral catastrophes which draw an impassable line between us and phases of past history. Thus we are



sure that what religious conversion is in modern days, that, in essential character, it was at the beginning of our era. The Jews and the Pagans who were converted to Christianity, from St Paul downwards, were not entirely wrenched from their previous standing-ground. They found a nobler life, a better hope; they found, indeed, salvation in Christ Jesus. But for all that, they did not suddenly change their mental habits and moral characters.

What was it that took place in the hearts of those who were the earliest converts to Christianity, at the time of their baptism, or rather, at the time of that conversion which might either precede, accompany, or follow that baptism, which was its outward and visible sign? This we can ascertain in at least one case, the case of the Apostle Paul, since he has himself laid bare to us the secrets of his heart in those inestimable letters, which are not merely primary treatises of religion, but also some of the most important historic documents in the world. That the Pauline epistles come really from St Paul I must not attempt to prove; and it is unnecessary, since modern criticism seems finally to have determined that if at all events the more important of those epistles do not in substance come from the writer whose name they bear, all historic criticism is bankrupt. In the light of his epistles St Paul becomes better known to us perhaps than any character of antiquity, known in his strength and his weakness, his mental habits and moral ideals, his heart and soul. And in this light we can very well see what changes were wrought in the apostle by his conversion. We see that it did

not destroy the results of his rabbinical education, his intellectual love of symbolism, his exaggerated subtlety of mind. It did not remedy the occasional hastiness of his temper, the jealousy which is so often the shadow of a great love, the fierceness of his indignation at ingratitude. It did not change the ways in which his mind worked, nor the salient features of his character. But all these it coloured with the light of a new revelation, and fused with the heat of a passionate purpose. He himself, in speaking of his conversion, uses a phrase which seems to sum up its results for his life: 'It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.' And in another place he writes: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And again: 'To me to live is Christ.' Now, it appears from many passages in his letters that St Paul knew but few facts in the life of his Master, and had heard but little of His actual teaching. Strange as it may seem, he regarded the knowledge of Christ after the flesh—that is, of the life passed by his Lord in Galilee and Judæa—as a matter of comparative indifference. Here, no doubt, he was wrong; and this feeling laid the churches which he founded open to a great danger, the danger of antinomianism, of spiritual pride which values the spirit so much more than the outward fact, as to be indifferent to the first principles of morality in conduct. But he far more than made up for the weakness of one side of his teaching by the divine inspiration of another side. He was really baptized into the spirit of Christ. He had received in a greater measure than any other man of the time the divine enthusiasm which radiated from the person of his Master. Little as he knew of the

teaching of Jesus, he had thoroughly assimilated the two great principles which, as I tried to show in the first lecture, lay at the root of it: surrender to the will of God, and active love of that will. The phrase, 'will of God,' meets us, as we have seen, continually in his writings.

Many able critics and theologians have found it difficult to understand how St Paul can have imbibed the spirit and continued the life of his Master, when the line of connection between them is so indistinct. To my thinking the problem is insoluble, unless one believes in divine inspiration and in the presence of a spiritual world in and around the soul of every man that lives. He who holds that men can hear but with their ears, and see but with their eyes, will find all history full of impossibilities which have yet come to pass, of waves of influence flowing from nowhere, of inexplicable coincidences and impossible sequences. I will not further speak of this matter, with which I deal elsewhere. It is indeed a ground on which one should not lightly tread. We will content ourselves with reaffirming the historic fact that the greatest of the early Christians received his inspiration, not from the narrative of a life, and not from apostolic preaching, but direct from the spiritual world, the doors of which had recently been opened to men.

### III

But the baptism into Christ, of which I shall have to speak in these lectures, is a baptism, not of men, but of ideas. Ideas, thoughts, and beliefs, no less than persons, can be raised from a lower to a higher plane, can

be changed in character, translated from the language of the ordinary and sensual life, or from the language of superstition, to that of the true life of the spirit. Now, it is certain that but few of the ideas and beliefs of historic Christianity are to be found in the teaching of the Founder and His Apostles. They came in from somewhere, but it is in fact seldom easy to ascertain the actual germ, the first origin of an idea. In the mental and spiritual, as in the physical world, everything arises out of something else; there is something corresponding to the conservation of energy. We can, by careful investigation, trace the history of ideas in the world, but the earliest stages are ever the least easy to trace.

If, however, we take up the early documents of Christianity, and study in them, in primitive form, some of the great ideas which have been valuable elements in the Christian Church, it is usually possible, if not very easy, to discern in what part of the ancient world they arose, to what race they primarily belonged, before they were taken over by Christianity, baptized, as I would put it, into the name of Christ. It is much less easy to be sure by whose hand the baptism was administered. In this matter our historic evidence is very imperfect. Some of the religious ideas of the pre-Christian world were baptized into the Church by the Master himself, some by His Apostles, some by uncertain authorities of the early community, the history of which is known to us very imperfectly. There can be no question that the Synoptic Gospels and the *Acts* were not committed to writing until many years after the crucifixion, when the first genera-

tion of Christians had mostly passed away. And such was the vitality and energy of the infant society that into one generation were concentrated changes which in a more stagnant age might have taken centuries. The whole working life of Stephen, the missionary journeys of St Paul, the preaching of Apollos, and many other events of which we have scant record, had deeply influenced Christianity. All these changes could not fail to have a profound effect on the plastic material of which the Gospels were made up. The best way of tracing the process is by a comparison with the formation of the life of St Francis of Assisi, which was moulded on a basis of historic fact by his disciples in the half century which followed his death. The records of this life show in many respects a marked parallel to the successive strata of the Gospel narratives.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, if it were necessary for me to attempt rigidly to determine the line which divides the actual teaching of Jesus from that teaching as modified by the earliest history of the Church, I should have before me a task of the greatest difficulty, one in which it would be necessary to use all the methods of critical investigation, and to compare in detail the views of learned commentators. But we can avoid this task, for the performance of which the present is by no means a suitable occasion, if we suppose—as I have already declared my intention to suppose—that it was rather a crisis than a complete break which took place in Christian history at the death of the Founder, that His spirit went on working in the society, and led His

<sup>1</sup> *Exploratio Evangelica*, ch. xiv. p. 174.

followers further in the direction in which they had already started. Infallibility the spirit of Christ certainly did not impart to the disciples. They remained limited in intelligence and in outlook, mere provincials compared with the cosmopolitan dwellers in Rome and Athens and Alexandria. But yet the early history of Christianity shows a continuous and marvellous growth, a power of mastering and assimilating what was good in its surroundings, and building up a mighty doctrine, though at the same time it clung tenaciously to certain errors and superstitions which belonged to the country and the age.

There are two ways of baptizing into Christ. In the Gospel, John the Baptist is represented as saying: 'I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh He that is mightier than I: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' There is a baptism which only touches the surface, and there is a baptism which enters into and affects the whole nature. Some of the ideas and institutions which came in contact with early Christianity were merely baptized with water: their bearing was changed, but not their nature. Other ideas and institutions were filled with the spirit of the Church and the fire of a divine enthusiasm. We may well call the first of these processes a baptism into the name of Christ, the second a baptism into the spirit of Christ. Both were common at all periods of Church history.

And not only was Christian baptism often but superficial, but it must be confessed that it did not always choose its subject with wisdom. Sometimes it passed by what was best in the religions and the



society by which it was surrounded, and chose the worse. It accepted into the society the mysticism of Asia, but rejected the Greek worship of health and of beauty. It accepted the organization and policy of Rome, but rejected the spirit of Roman patriotism. In working back towards the Christian origins we find on all sides ideas of value thrown aside, and in many cases it seems to us that the Church gave way more than it need have given way to materialism and superstition. But in all matters of history, what we have to seek for is not the ideal best, but the best which was possible amid the surroundings of the time and in the face of existing necessities. Often, though by no means always, a course which we regret, and which has had for us evil results, was the only course really open to the Church.

And after all, had the Church from the first been gifted with perfect wisdom in such matters, there would have arisen the one good custom which corrupts the world. If any age were perfect, the next age would be without vitality. We live by struggle and stress; and the burden of an infallibility in the past would be enough to crush the human race.

#### IV

The greatest of all the borrowings of Christianity from Judaism, the most remarkable of all its baptisms was this: the new religion baptized into Christ the Jewish idea of God.

It is true that at the beginning of our era some kind of monotheism was accepted by all persons of thought and education, by the Stoic and the Peripatetic

as well as by the Jew. But monotheism is precisely a doctrine which may be regarded in many ways with vastly different moral and intellectual results. From the historic point of view, it is sufficiently clear that it would not be from Stoicism that the doctrine would come into Christianity. And after all, the Jewish doctrine was very different from that of the philosophers. In a recent admirable work,<sup>1</sup> Dr E. Caird has shown by what steps the thought of the Greeks advanced from the belief in many deities to the recognition of the divine unity. It was a gradual process, and never quite complete. Most of the Greek thinkers held that although the divine power in the world was one, yet there was no strong opposition between such a belief and polytheism; and that while as thinkers they could recognize one eternal basis of the world of phenomena, yet as patriots they were quite justified in bringing offerings to the deities recognized by the state, to Apollo, Athena, or Hermes, who were indeed mere personifications of certain sides of the divine being. Ordinary people did not rise to the level of monotheism, but, at most, to what Max Müller called *henotheism*, the exclusive devotion to one deity recognized as supreme among spiritual powers. Between the speculative monotheism of the philosophers or the henotheism of many of the people, and the ardent passion for the solitary majesty of Jehovah which possessed the Jews, there was a vast gap. And it was the Jewish idea which was taken into Christianity.

But surely, it may be said, the Jewish doctrine of

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, 1904.

Jehovah was in itself Christian, and needed no baptism into Christianity. I have, however, already observed that there are many kinds of monotheism; and although into some of the earlier schools of Christianity the Jewish doctrine passed unmodified, yet it did receive baptism for the Church both from the hands of the Founder and from those of some of the first apostles of the faith.

Every student of the Old Testament is aware that in the earlier books Jehovah is often spoken of in the language of extreme anthropomorphism. In *Genesis* we read how the God Jehovah walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening; and the vision of Jehovah granted to Moses was only of the back part, since no man could see His face and live.<sup>1</sup> By degrees the idea of God among the Jews was refined and raised, through the influence of a succession of prophets, until in Nehemiah we have the phrase, 'God of Heaven' in the place of 'God of Israel.' But even at the beginning of our era, there was among the mass of the people much that was tribal in the conception. Jehovah was the God of the Jews rather than of the human race. The Jews were as far from the Christian idea of a great spiritual ruler and father of the human race in one direction as the Greek philosophers were in another direction.

It was precisely by His method of inwardness, by His regarding all things in relation to man and human conduct, that Jesus transformed Jewish into Christian monotheism. We do not find in the Gospels any statement of the abstract omnipotence and omniscience

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus*, xxxiii. 23.

of God ; but we have definite statements of the relation of God to every man and every living thing. He will give all good gifts to those who ask Him. He counts the hairs of the head of every man, and no sparrow falls to the ground without His permission. Jesus did not say that His followers must give up their tribal narrownesses in regard to God ; but He showed how God is near to every one of us, and close to the source of every word and deed. He cut away the roots of the Jewish exclusiveness, and the plant soon withered within the limits of the Christian society.

It does not appear that Jesus ever set forth in definite form His relationship to the God of Spirits. He declared that God was His Father ; He accepted the call to the Messiahship ; and in a few passages in the Synoptic Gospels He seems to claim a special relation, a peculiar closeness to the Heavenly Father. But there can be no reasonable doubt that the phrases put into His mouth in the Fourth Gospel, in which He speaks of Himself as the Light of the World, the Door of the Sheepfold, the Stem of the Vine, were not uttered during the earthly ministry, but belong to the consciousness of the second generation of believers. They re-baptized, so to speak, the doctrine of the divine unity by adding to it that Christ was the Word of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, in whom God was revealed to men.

Clearly, it is impossible for me here to go into all the momentous results of this further translation of the idea. Alike, for good and for evil, it has worked with incomparable force in the history of the Church. It contains, I doubt not, truth for all time ; but it is

truth which may be only too easily travestied, and may become the source of unmeasured superstition. But this second transformation of monotheism is no longer in accordance with the spirit of Judaism. It is an outgrowth of the contact between the spirit of Greece and that of Mysticism ; and what more I may have to say in regard to it will find a more appropriate place in later lectures.

## V

No Christian can ever forget that when our Master gave His formula as to the love of God,<sup>1</sup> He added to it an assertion of our duty to love our neighbour as ourself. This is not the first and the great commandment, but it is like unto it. It would, of course, be quite absurd to try to find an origin in place or in time for the love of one's neighbour, which was thus adopted into Christianity, and assigned the second place among Christian virtues. If men had not learned, at least in some degree, to love their neighbours, mankind could never have risen above the most debased savagery. And in the republics of the ancient world the love of one's neighbour became one of the ruling passions of life, the bond which bound together the members of a city or a family, the inspiration which made it easy to meet death in battle, or to spend one's life in the service of the state.

Such an universal and necessary feeling of the human heart might seem to belong naturally to

<sup>1</sup> It is strange that whereas in Mark this formula is attributed to Jesus, both Matthew and Luke say that it originated with a certain lawyer who was tempting Him. We cannot give up to an anonymous author so striking a collocation of two Old Testament laws.

Christianity, without need of baptism. Baptism was for such as needed to wash away their sins. Surely a feeling which was always on the side of good, and tended always to the salvation of society, needed no baptism. Had Christianity been less original it might have taken this line. But Jesus, by what Mr Montefiore calls 'a brilliant flash of the highest religious genius,' saw that philanthropy needed to be changed by the introduction of a Christian spirit.

The baptism is certainly not given in the added words 'as thyself.' The phrase seems almost cold; for many of the heroes of Greece and Rome had loved others more than themselves, and given their lives freely for the sake of their friends. But though to a pagan moralist the limitation of the love to others might seem wanting in ideality, yet it is no restriction when considered in its real connection. The baptism lies in the attaching of the phrase about the love of one's neighbour to the other part of the rule, which speaks of the love of God. It is through loving God that we are to love our neighbour; and our love for our neighbour and our love for ourselves are alike to be part of our love of God.

It is this grounding of the love of our neighbour on the love of God, as the author of *Ecce Homo* has admirably set forth, which constitutes the most striking element in Christianity. The Jew had loved his Jewish neighbour; the votaries of Mithras and other particular deities had based love for one another on their relation to their guardian divinity. But the scope of the Christian version of love is shown by the parable which in Luke is brought in to enforce the



precept, the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this tale it is made clear that what is really lovable in man is the divine spirit which lies at the root of all individual being. The common life of each must needs yearn towards the common element in the life of the race, unless it is choked by egotism or indolence, or some of the hundred forms in which 'I am I' appears to shut off the soul from God and man. The parable of the Good Samaritan does not reach beyond the limits of the surroundings of Jesus; the hero of it is not a Syrian nor a Greek, but a member of a despised section of the Jewish nation. But the principle which it embodies embraces the whole of mankind, and proves Christianity suited to be a world religion.

## VI

If we examine the histories of early Christianity, and, in particular, the admirable *Expansion of Christianity* of Professor Harnack, we shall see that in fact it was the practical working out of the doctrine of Christ as to God and man which attracted disciples, and brought about a world-wide triumph.

The passion for the unity of God, His nearness to man, His love for His creatures, was directly opposed to, and finally brought to destruction the polytheism of the Greek world. The Christian teachers were never tired of attacking, with anger and contempt, the numberless deities of the heathen, the gods of Greece and Rome, the gods of Egypt and of Persia, the gods whom the popular enthusiasm had made out of deceased heroes and kings. They ridiculed them as mere men who had lived on the earth, and were

now raised to divine rank ; they attacked them as evil spirits, who had persuaded mankind to do them homage ; and in the long run, they persuaded or compelled, by the force of a divine enthusiasm, the worshippers of Apollo, Mithras, Isis and Sabazius to allow that the God of the Christians and the Redeemer who had revealed Him to men were incomparably greater than the beings they had adored. They degraded the gods of the old world to that rank of demons in which they survived for ages in the superstitions of the ignorantly conservative. When the Christian exorcists cast evil spirits out of the possessed, these spirits often confessed that they were heathen deities, Apollo or another. In the long warfare waged in the realm of the human spirit Christ was victorious, and the Deity whom He revealed survived alone.

And just as Christian monotheism vanquished heathen polytheism, so did Christian humanity and charity drive out and destroy the ordinary relations between man and man as accepted in the Greek world. Nothing more tended to bring in converts to the new faith than the spirit of gentle and kindly beneficence which at first, on the whole, prevailed between the followers of Christ, and which was the direct result of the Christian enthusiasm. There were, of course, many divisions and disputes in the Church, and much feeling which was wholly unchristian. But the callousness which looked unmoved on suffering, the indifference which men commonly felt towards those who had on them no special claim of race or kinship, gradually gave way before the Christian enthusiasm for man as

man, for man as a Son of God, and a being for whom Christ died.

So it was in early days of Christianity, and so it has been ever since. The mass of mankind judge a religion, not by its tenets, still less on historic grounds, but mainly by considering how it works in private life, whether its professors show gentleness, sympathy, self-denial in their dealings with others, whether they are just and generous towards their fellowmen. And since experience showed that on the whole an acceptance of the Christian faith made men better and happier, there was set up in the world an inevitable drift towards that faith, a drift which even persecution rather increased than diminished, since it raised the standard of Christian ethics and kept aloof the corruption which inevitably arises when the conditions of life are too easy.

Looking back, after many centuries, on the enthusiasm of the early Christians, we see that it was not altogether lovely. We see that they often failed to discern and to admire what was good in the religion and morals of the heathen world. They were often narrow, sometimes unjust. After all, this merely amounts to saying that they were men. Did any great social movement in the world ever succeed except in the hands of enthusiasts who passed beyond the bounds of decorum, and had a fanatical belief in the value of their own principles? The visible Church upon earth has been, at the best, but a rude and corrupt embodiment of the Kingdom, of the ideal Church which exists in Heaven and in the eternal purposes of God. The earthly Church is in Christianity ever what

the writer to the Hebrews shows the Jewish Church always to have been, a partial realization of a divine type or idea, a reflection in the clouds of the glory of the rising sun.

You may be very sure that you will not hear from me any defence of the infallibility of the Christian Church, still less of the infallibility of any branch of it. Bishops have erred, and Councils and Popes. The Church is no more infallible than is the Bible or any of the outward expressions of divine inspiration. But taking the word Church in its broad sense, as the whole body of Christians wheresoever assembled and howsoever organized, we can see that the secret of its mission in the world lies in its continuation upon earth of the obedience of its Founder, in its resolve to do so far as it may the will of God among men. How it has fared in this great mission I shall try in future lectures to set forth.

### LECTURE III

## THE BAPTISM OF JUDÆA

As the Founder of Christianity was of Jewish birth, and lived all His human life amid Jewish surroundings and in contact with Jewish men and women, it was natural that the baptism of Judaism was very largely, or indeed almost entirely, His work. To contemporaries it might have seemed, and in fact it did seem, that Christianity was but a new sect of Judaism. And this view, which now seems to us so perverse, had in it some truth. The earliest form of Christianity was obviously and predominantly Jewish. On some of the early Christian sarcophagi, where Jesus is represented, He appears with markedly Jewish features. This representation was, of course, not based on any evidence, since it was impossible that any Jew of that age should have made a portrait, or allowed a portrait of himself to be made. It is rather an appearance in art of a moral conviction, a parable for us. But though the features of our Lord are thus represented, they are soon idealized into a type of the highest humanity. In the same way did Jesus Himself read

through the mask of Judaism the essential spiritual nature of man, and He translated the beliefs and principles of Judaism into such as belonged to the inmost spirit of humanity, and such as were fit for survival through future ages.

## I

If there be one Jewish idea which was by the Master Himself built into the Christian fabric in a changed and renovated form, it is the Messianic idea. As the Jews in the Hellenistic age found their nationality more and more hemmed in by the world-wide culture of Greece and the conquering power of Rome, they more and more took refuge in the hope of a coming deliverer, who should break the power of their enemies and set up again the throne of David in Jerusalem. There was a merely racial and secular element in the hope: the Jews eagerly believed that they were a race chosen out of all the world by God. But it was not merely racial; it included a belief in the triumph of goodness, so that the Gentiles should not merely bring wealthy tribute to Mount Zion, but also look up to it as the home of righteousness, and to the people who dwelt there as the priests of the most high God. The English reader is familiar with this fact from the reading of Isaiah and some of the later prophets. It is expressed less nobly, but with equal persistence, in the books of the Jewish Apocrypha, by the writer of the *Book of Daniel* and others of the Hellenistic age.

I have already tried to set forth the fundamental principle alike of the teaching and of the life of the



Founder of Christianity. I have shown how it was His way ever to pass from what was without to what was within, from the material to the spiritual, from the merely apparent to the real. And in the depths of the consciousness thus reached, the deepest reality discerned by Him was the will of God as a law and as a power, the law of the ideal, and a power which ever bears men in the direction of the ideal.

We see how Jesus applied this method of regarding things to the Messianic expectation, and how that hope changed in His hands. According to the synoptic writers, Jesus was not in the least degree anxious to be regarded as the Messiah, though by degrees He accepted the designation. But as to the way in which He interpreted the Messianic idea, we are clearly informed. The kingdom of the Messiah, according to His way of regarding all things, could not be a mere worldly dominion. It was not to be brought in by any warlike triumph. It was quite consistent with the maintenance of the Roman Empire. His sway was to be in the hearts of men: not seen, but felt within. It was to spread like leaven, but not with observation. And its laws were not to be written and preserved in chanceries, but such as had been from the beginning written in human nature by the hand of God, and such as God revealed to mankind from time to time by the mouth of His servants and of His Son.

I think that nearly all those who have written on the life of Jesus have gone too far in crediting Him with statesmanship and elaborate schemes for the salvation of mankind. To form such plans seems to

me a thing foreign to a nature resting wholly in God, caring only that God's will should be done. Even the disciples were bidden, when summoned before tribunals, to take no thought what words they should utter, but to trust to the spirit of the Father which spoke in them. Thus I do not find any proof—and I do not feel sure—that Jesus ever tried, consciously, to form a view of His own nature and office, or to discern the future which lay before the society which He founded. So long as there was no barrier of sin and of self between His soul and His Father in Heaven, He would have at all times a power beyond that of men, and a wisdom which came from above. This was His life, the life which He lived ever in God. It seems from our records that there was one moment only when that abiding consciousness of God was for a moment, not lost, but obscured, the moment when physical pain on the cross was cruelly racking a sensitive frame. If our accounts are in that matter accurate, a new and intensely human touch is given to a life which might otherwise have seemed, as it seemed to the Gnostics, to have been lived really in Heaven, and only apparently among men. Having regard, then, to the untroubled divine consciousness of the life of our Founder, I should venture to say that to Him the nature of the Messiah was a self-evident perception, and that He was less anxious than we should naturally suppose to explain His own claim to the great office.

This frame of mind is admirably described by one of the greatest theologians of the Church, the anonymous author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. In describing it he uses, as his Master often used, the

language of the Psalms. He sums up the Messianic attitude in the phrases 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,' 'Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!' The consecration and devotion of the will is the crown and end of all the ancestral piety which had found an outlet in sacrifice since man had passed out of the savage life.

But naturally, this was too lofty a flight for the mass of the disciples, who were, after all, but average human beings, though inspired by a divine enthusiasm. For them the doctrine of the Messiah in this new and inward form was too hard, and the great interest which it had for them was that it enabled them to regard their Master as the Messiah, although He was not outwardly victorious, and to apply to Him the numberless passages in the Old Testament writings which had a Messianic interpretation. Immediately upon the Master's death began the speculation as to His nature and His relation to God, which has gone on until the present day, and will go on hereafter.

We can trace in the New Testament remains of the various ways in which the early disciples endeavoured to embody their feeling and sense of their Master's divine kingship. Into these I cannot go at any length, but I will briefly mention them. The simplest and most primitive way was to connect Jesus by pedigree with David, and thus to make Him the rightful heir and representative of the Davidic kingship. In Matthew this tendency is decidedly prominent. The descent had, of course, according to Jewish custom, to be traced through the male and not through the female line. The genealogies prefixed to two of our

Gospels are relics of this attempt. Obviously, it involved taking the Messianic kingdom in a literal and outward fashion, and confining it to Palestine; and as the facts of history as well as of religion were inconsistent with this rendering, it soon passed out of fashion, the more rapidly when it began to be believed that Jesus was not properly the son of Joseph.

Another interpretation, almost as early but more spiritual, made the Messianic character of Jesus date from His baptism, on which occasion, as we read in one apocryphal Gospel, a voice from Heaven proclaimed: 'Thou art my beloved son, this day have I begotten thee.' To find the origin of the attachment of such extreme importance to baptism, we have to pass outside the pale of Judaism, into the dim region of contemporary religions of the near East. But though baptism, when once adopted into Christianity, always preserved a sacred and indeed sacramental character, yet the application of such a view to the vocation of the Master did not long remain in the front line of Christian theory. It belongs rather to less orthodox and more obscure sects. In the writings of St Paul it may be perhaps traced, since he speaks of the disciples as 'buried with Christ in baptism.' And among the specially Pauline sects, such as the Paulicians, it long survived; it seems to survive even now among some of the obscure communities of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>

But in the Christian Church, the notion of an adoption of Jesus Christ to the Messiahship at baptism met a rival, in the long run a completely successful

<sup>1</sup> See Mr F. C. Conybeare's publication of an ancient liturgy still in use among Paulicians.

rival, in the view that the birth of the Master was purely miraculous, that He had no human father, but was born of a pure virgin. In the prefaces to two of our Gospels this view is adopted; and the two Evangelists tell varying tales as to the circumstances of the birth, agreeing as to its supernatural character, and that it took place at Bethlehem. The last point is noteworthy, as birth at Bethlehem, the town of David, would seem more properly to belong to the view which regarded Jesus Christ as of the royal family of David, rather than the view that his birth was altogether exceptional. But nothing is more usual in the writings of all ancient historians than contamination, by the transference of circumstances suited only to one version of a piece of history, or supposed history, to another version to which they are inappropriate. Of the tales of the birth of Christ I have spoken sufficiently elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and I need not further pursue the matter.

The Fourth Evangelist, so often a leader in the higher ways, puts into the mouth of his Master phrases which lift to another level the crude views of kingship over Israel, and sonship to God current in the early society. He represents Jesus before Pilate as resting His claim to royalty on His divine inspiration: 'My kingdom is not of this world,' 'To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' Similarly, in regard to the Messianic sonship, the Fourth Evangelist represents his Master as saying: 'Say ye of Him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world,

<sup>1</sup> *Exploratio Evangelica*, ch. xix.

Thou blasphemest : because I said, I am the Son of God ?' The sonship to God consists not in physical descent, but in spiritual consecration.

Such were the earliest attempts to explain the divine personality of the Master ; of later attempts I shall have to speak in another lecture. The notable point is how early the Messianic idea was baptized into Christ, was transported from the Jewish to the Christian camp. The first crude theory of descent from David was set aside because it was purely national, was inconsistent with the destinies of a religion which was already universal in scope. Nothing could more clearly show the mastering and assimilating force which the Christian spirit exercised from the very first.

## II

The Messianic belief did not stand isolated in the Jewish mind, but was part of a whole scheme of beliefs in regard to the approaching end of the world, or of the existing constitution of society, beliefs with which all the students of the Bible are familiar, because they are prominent in the *Book of Daniel* in the Old Testament, and in the *Apocalypse* in the New. The victory of the Messiah was not to be only a warlike triumph, but was to be accompanied by signs in the heaven above and in the earth below, by vast cataclysms in which a great part of the human race would perish, and which should usher in a new and a better state of things, wherein the hand of God should no longer be hidden in clouds, but should visibly direct mankind.



The Jewish literature dealing with these great catastrophes is little known to the ordinary reader, and has not in fact been long known to the learned. It stretches from the second century before to the second century after our era,<sup>1</sup> growing in force and distinctness, and shows with what purpose of heart the Jews of that time turned from the meanness of their condition in the existing world, the political subjection to Rome, the intellectual domination of Greece, to a state of things about to be revealed, when the Jewish race should have wide sway, and Jewish ideas be the life of mankind. The Gentiles, as least in the view of the less fanatical of the Apocalyptic writers, were to be changed rather than destroyed; but their salvation was to be the act of the God of Israel, working through the race which He had chosen, from of old, as His representative on earth.

Since the Apocalyptic ideas were amongst the most vivid and living of the beliefs of the Jews, it was impossible that they should fail to influence Christianity from the first. The Founder would have at once to take up a position in regard to them, to determine whether or not they could in any form be admitted into His society, or whether they were to be opposed to the uttermost. They were a prominent feature of the early surroundings of the faith, and must be converted or rejected.

We reach now one of the most difficult parts of the early history of Christianity, one as to which the opinions of able writers most widely differ. Some of

<sup>1</sup> A good account of it by a high authority, Dr Charles, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*: article, *Apocalypses*.

them find no difficulty in supposing that Jesus adopted the Apocalyptic beliefs of His contemporaries in a literal fashion, and applied them to Himself; that He fully expected the death upon the cross to usher in a series of supernatural manifestations, in the midst of which He would return from the unseen world in great power and glory, and establish a vast spiritual dominion on the earth.

Now, I am quite ready to accept this view if it can be established. It was the life, the divine obedience of Jesus Christ which saved the world, not His theories as to the past or the future of the visible earth. It would not be very disturbing to be assured that the Founder of Christianity looked forward to a speedy return in the clouds of heaven, an expectation which, as we know, was not fulfilled. But I do not think that such a view can be made probable, still less proved to demonstration, in spite of what may be, and has been, said for it.<sup>1</sup> In the first place, the evidence on which it rests is very untrustworthy; and in the second place, it appears to be inconsistent with what we know as to the mental habits and tendencies of our Master. Although it is quite certain that the first disciples lived in constant expectation of the speedy end of the existing frame of society and the return in power of their Lord, yet such belief was probably not based on the teaching of Jesus, but was rather a Jewish survival to which He gave no countenance.

No doubt there is evidence which tells for the

<sup>1</sup> The most recent advocate is Schweitzer, in his *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*.

announcement by Jesus before His death of His speedy return. Passages will occur to everyone familiar with the New Testament. The great discourse on the end of the world in the simplest and most primitive of our Gospels, that of Mark, is very lengthy and detailed, and at first sight it does not seem easy to doubt its authenticity. But the highest English authority<sup>1</sup> on the subject of Jewish Apocalypses tells us that he is persuaded that it is of composite character. Some parts of it probably represent the sayings of Jesus, but in these there is nothing of the Jewish Apocalypse: only an anticipation of the disturbance of secular society by the preaching of the new doctrine. Other parts, such as those where signs in the skies and catastrophes on earth are detailed, have in them nothing which resembles the sayings of Jesus, but are exactly like the ordinary stock imagery of the Jewish Apocalypses. If any intelligent person reads carefully the passage in Mark he will be able to separate the two sources; for though they are in order intermixed, they no more mingle in sense than does oil mix with water. Surely there is nothing unnatural in the supposition that the first disciples, having their heads full of the language of Jewish Apocalypses, misunderstood sayings of their Master and repeated them in such a connection that they make Him seem to countenance much that in reality He did not approve.

There are doubtless some other passages in the Synoptic Gospels in which a speedy and cataclysmic return of the Son of Man is spoken of, such passages

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, *l.c.*

as the parable of the trial and separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew, and the narrative of the trial before the High Priest. When one has studied the question of the formation of the tradition embodied in our Gospels, one is not disposed to attach very great importance to detached phrases which appear in them. It is reasonably held that the parable I have mentioned is a very late part of the First Gospel. Passages which speak of the Second Coming are but few, and their insertion can easily be explained, without supposing them to be the very words of Jesus. Since, however, their separate consideration would not be on this occasion suitable, let us fall back on more general considerations.

We have seen how Jesus completely changed the character of the Jewish Messianic belief, how in a word He baptized it into His Church, by making the manifestation of the Messiah inward and spiritual instead of outward and material. Is it reasonable to think that He would have dealt otherwise with the Apocalyptic beliefs which belonged to the same phase of thought and belief? Would He have spoken of an inward salvation which would be revealed in an outward convulsion of nature? or of a deliverer from sin who would be revealed in the clouds of Heaven? His doctrine that He was come to do the will of His Father in Heaven applies not only to the supersession of animal sacrifice, as the writer to the Hebrews teaches, but also to the supersession of all mere outward manifestations of power and splendour. The doctrine is a direct denial of the whole spirit of the Jewish Apocalypses. Jesus is represented as rejecting an

appeal to the Heavenly Father to intervene through legions of angels to save His Son from the cross. Could He have thus spoken of supernatural aid if He hoped soon to return by its help to triumph over His persecutors, and to forcibly deliver His followers? In my opinion, to suppose that our Master anticipated a speedy return in glory is to take purpose out of His life, and much meaning out of His teaching.

But what, it may be said, was the belief of our Lord as to the future which lay beyond the violent death, which He doubtless expected? If I may, with all humility and reserve, answer this question, I should say that He left that future wholly in the hands of the Father in Heaven, and did not speculate in regard to it. Why should we hesitate to think that He lived in the light of His own teaching as to not taking thought for the morrow, but entirely resigning the questions of life and death and what comes after death to God?

But in this case also the disciples, as was but natural, could not rise to the level of their Master. They were obliged to speculate as to the future. And the less their Master had said upon the subject, the more they would be driven to take up the current Apocalyptic views. But they altered them, in making their Lord the central figure of the landscape, the hero of the sublime tragedy. He was to return soon, in glory, to destroy His enemies, and to reign with His saints in a renewed and glorified world. Even so great a religious genius as St Paul did not, at least in the earlier part of his life, escape the dominance of such views. They became incorporated into mediæval Christianity. Could this be called a baptism of

Apocalyptic beliefs into Christ? Perhaps into the name of Christ, but certainly not into the spirit of Christ. When two of the Apostles were ready to call down fire from heaven on an inhospitable village, Jesus rebuked them, saying: 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of.' We can well imagine His addressing the same words to the author of our *Apocalypse*, and indeed to all who expected His return in visible power.

At a later time parts of Jewish Apocalyptic belief did receive a more spiritual translation into Christianity, when mingled with other elements. The beliefs in a visible Church on earth and in a great judgment of the dead according to their works, both form an important part of historic Christianity. And into these beliefs some Jewish elements entered; but they were prepared for Christian translation by being mingled with other elements coming, not from Judæa, but from the world of Hellenism, as we shall see in another lecture.

Meantime, half-Christianized Jewish beliefs as to the end of the world, and a great day of judgment were very persistent and very prominent in the early history of Christianity. And as in all human affairs good and evil are inextricably mingled, we need not be surprised to find that they were in many ways a source of power and of virtue. They had arisen among a small people in dread of being crushed by powerful neighbours. They persisted in a small society which soon found arrayed against it the mighty forces of the Roman Empire. Belief in the transitory nature of civil society gave to the early Christians an other-worldliness which indeed made them less inclined to strive to alter for the better the lands in which they dwelt, yet which



gave them a power of resistance, a force of contempt for the merely visible and material, which greatly helped them in persevering. They were like men waiting for their Lord, and not knowing the day or the hour of His appearing. We see in the Epistles of St Paul alike the good and the mischief of such an attitude.

But the belief in the speedy and visible coming of the Son of Man could not, in the nature of things, live on long with full intensity: 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' Even from some of the expressions as to the Second Advent used in the later Pauline epistles we may gather that the Apocalyptic hope was dying down in the minds of the disciples. Before very long it gave way to a belief in the judgment of souls, which came, not from a Jewish, but from an Egyptian or Babylonian source. In modern days the belief in a second coming is not openly abandoned by Christians, and, indeed, retains its place in the Creed. But the power has departed from it. Unlike the doctrine of the future life, it could pass away without much harm to the Church. It is like a garment which is faded and decayed and can no longer be worn, but which is retained in the closet because of associations which belong to its earlier history.

### III

Besides the Messianic hope and the national eschatology, there were other important features of Judaism which were baptized into the new faith by Jesus and by the disciples. Most prominent among these features are those great classics of the higher life, the

Jewish sacred books, and the Jewish law which they embody.

One of the most striking sections of that summary of Christian teaching, which is called 'The Sermon on the Mount,' consists of a citation of a number of theses of Jewish morality and law, and a deliberate attempt to transform these theses by the introduction of a new standard of ethics and a new way of regarding the world. Everyone is familiar with the teaching of Jesus there set forth in regard to marriage and the family, in regard to fasting and prayer, in regard to oaths, and the forgiveness of injuries, and many other matters. That this teaching really, in all essentials, comes from the Master, is rendered almost certain by many indications. It is original, and it bears a strong tinge of personality. The 'I say unto you' recurring again and again gives it an air of definite and official legislation, which further study of it does but confirm.

The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount represents the best current morality of the Jews, that of the Pharisees, in part rejected, and in part carried further, made deeper and broader, more spiritual and more human, by the introduction of precisely those elements in the original doctrine of Christianity on which I have already dwelt, inwardness as opposed to formality, and an abiding sense of a close relation to an indwelling spiritual power. This is the true Christian baptism; and in this case the baptism is administered by the Founder Himself. The inward and spiritual character of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is so familiar to all, and so continually enforced from the pulpit, that I need dwell on it but for a minute,

to show how entirely it confirms the views I am setting forth. I need but recall to your minds how the great Teacher proclaims that prayer of the heart, though made in secret, is of far more avail with God than ostentatious prayer in public, and fasting which can be detected by no outward sign is more real fasting than that proclaimed to the world by outward squalor of appearance. I need but remind you how, while society is shocked by a crime of murder, and law is intent on its punishment, Jesus Christ shows how spiritual murder may be committed in a heart which cherishes hatred, and repudiates the tie which binds together all men as brothers and as sons of God; and how, while society does not regard illicit passion unless it finds vent in anti-social act, Jesus Christ points out that the whole essence of the sin of adultery, as distinguished from the crime of adultery, lies in a wrong direction of thought, a covetous disposition of the heart, which will sacrifice the spiritual well-being of the beloved one on the altar of a sensuous gratification.

In the same way does the Master speak of the more ascetic virtues. In His time there were in Egypt and Palestine many who had renounced the world, and dwelt either in solitude, or, like the Essenes, in small societies, in order to cultivate an ascetic renunciation of all that the world most desires. In the teaching of Jesus it is proclaimed that renunciation also is of the heart, that the substance and kernel of it consists in not desiring above measure the good things of life, but in seeking rather the kingdom of the divine will. He who, dwelling in ordinary civil

life, so far rises above it as to be ready in obedience to divine calling to live at a lower level of comfort and security, has vanquished the world more completely than the professed anchorite, just as the conquerors of a country, if they can dwell dispersed among the inhabitants of that country, show a more complete mastery of them than if they be gathered into garrisons and dwell in fenced cities.

It does not appear that our Master condemned the outward manifestation of what goes on in the heart. He did not forbid public prayer, nor open almsgiving, nor the professedly ascetic life. He neither condemned nor commended. He contented Himself with showing wherein lay the true goodness of ascetic abstentions and of acts of charity. As to the forms in which the inner life might find it necessary to manifest itself, He does not give directions. The life must take its own course, must find for itself ways of adaptation to the existing frame of human society. And herein lies the secret of the universality and perpetuity of the teaching of Jesus. Being independent of any particular intellectual atmosphere, any form of political organization, any definite constitution of society, it could coexist with whatever tendencies of thought and organization might from time to time arise. To use the comparison of the Gospel, it could be added like leaven to any kind of meal or flour, and would at once proceed to change it according to its own nature.

Most Christians are quite familiar with the turn given by their Founder to many parts of the legislation which passed as Mosaic, the law of marriage, the

law of the Sabbath, the custom of oaths, and the like. It is perhaps a less widely recognized truth that He dealt with other parts of the Jewish Bible in the same spirit. No disposition of mind in regard to the Scriptures could have been more opposed to His than that of the Pharisees, who regarded the whole of them as verbally inspired, or, I may add, than that of the modern Christians, who wish to accept Old Testament narratives as literal and accurate history. When His opponents brought forward as an objection to His mission that according to the Scripture the Messiah must be descended from David, He replied in such a way as to show that the question was not one of lineal descent, but of spiritual predominance, for David called the Messiah Lord, so that the claim of the Messiah could be in no way dependent on mere genealogy. We have already seen that this view was too spiritual to be accepted by the disciples, who were obliged to search for other and more outward claims to Messianic rank. So again, when the Jews represented the sacredness of the Sabbath as a result of the fact that on that day God rested from His creation, Jesus interposed with the profound saying: 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,' showing that it was the facts of human nature, and not any argument drawn from history, which constituted a proper basis for religious observance.

There is one partial exception to this custom which is very noteworthy. In the matters of marriage and divorce our Lord's words, if rightly reported,—and there is no reason to think otherwise—do constitute a definite rule of conduct. This is a very remarkable

fact ; and it is hard to see how any Christian community which breaks away from the Master's law, in these profoundly important matters, can claim to live by His rule. If there is one thing in the world which is definitely anti-Christian, it is a facile divorce law.

In relation to the whole of the Jewish Scriptures, the method of Jesus is the same. In all the cases in which, in the Synoptic Gospels, He is represented as dealing with the Old Testament, it is thus treated as having direct contact with spiritual fact, not as a series of documents having power of outward obligation, nor as historic record.

In the Hellenistic age many learned and pious Jews had taught that the literal meaning of a passage of Scripture was not its highest meaning. Writers like Philo were certainly far from treating the Pentateuch and the Prophets in a too literal sense. To them the hidden and underlying meaning was, to all men who could think seriously, the more important. So they built up out of the lives of the patriarchs and the fortunes of Israel a series of elaborate allegories, conveying lessons, sometimes lofty and spiritual, sometimes merely fanciful. But between this way of treating Scripture and the way of Jesus there was perhaps an even greater contrast than was offered to it by pure literality ; for the Jewish philosophers did not bring out of the sacred text its real psychological value. They merely put into it their own teaching, whether good or indifferent. They taught Platonism or Stoicism with a Jewish tinge, using the stories of Adam and Abraham and Moses as mere props for the support of their doctrines, just as Cicero uses the old



Roman tales of the heroes of his race. But Jesus brings every passage to the touchstone of fact: not historic fact, but fact of spiritual psychology.

It may well be said that thus our Lord baptized the Old Testament into Christianity; but the baptism in this case, one must confess, only bore fruit after a long while. The first disciples were resolutely set on baptizing the Scriptures in quite another fashion; into the name, and not into the spirit of their Master. They sought for literal correspondences between Old Testament prophecies and the facts of their Founder's life. Soon St Paul takes up the matter in a somewhat different way. He is determined that the Jewish law shall be closely connected with the grace which comes through Jesus Christ. The relations between the two he tries to work out with all the force of his subtle intellect; yet we must confess that he is more successful in accentuating the differences between them than in showing their near relations. So we are not surprised to find that some of the more ardent disciples of St Paul, such as the Gnostic Marcion, were disposed to set aside the Old Testament altogether as a revelation on a lower level than the revelation of Jesus Christ, and even imparted by an inferior deity. Among the writers of the New Testament, the one who has done most to Christianize the Jewish scriptures is the writer of the admirable *Epistle to the Hebrews*. This author, anonymous, yet full of the noblest inspiration, has not only baptized into Christ some of the root ideas of early religion, such institutions as the priesthood and the sacrifice of atonement, but he has also taken up some parts of the primitive history or quasi-history of

the Jews and given them for all times a Christian bearing, such as the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem, the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, and especially the relations of Abraham with Melchizedek. In the last example, no doubt, we come to an allegorizing treatment not unlike that of Philo; yet so pure and fine is the Christian spirit of the writer that we scarcely notice the excess of fancy.

There are certain parts of the Jewish scriptures of which it may be said that they scarcely needed a change, a baptism or consecration, to become part of Christianity. Divines have spoken of a 'mind naturally Christian' though dwelling outside the Christian pale. There is a spirit naturally Christian to be found in some of the Psalms, for example. Not in all the Psalms, of course. It is a great misfortune that our Anglican Church feels itself bound to repeat in service every month the whole of the Jewish psalter; for some of the Psalms, as I need scarcely point out, are not only not Christian in spirit, but even full of revenge and uncharitableness, and far below the level of what was good in the contemporary literature of Greece. The mere addition to them of the Christian doxology is only a baptism into the name of Christ; into the spirit of Christ they cannot be baptized. But some of the Psalms need scarcely even verbal change, but are ready and natural vehicles of real Christian feeling and aspiration. Such Psalms as the 22nd, the 51st, the 104th are, in their way, masterpieces of religious expression. They stand so close to the facts of religious psychology that they may be said to belong, not to one

age or nation, but, like the Sermon on the Mount itself, to all men at all times. Other parts of the Old Testament writings, such as parts of *Proverbs*, have also this tone of natural Christianity.

On the other hand, one is disposed, futile and perhaps wrong as the feeling may be, to regret that the early Church, beginning with St Paul, was so fully determined to baptize into Christ the Jewish cosmogony. True though it be that the account of the creation in *Genesis*, when compared either with the parallel tales which have in recent years been discovered on the clay tablets of Babylon, or the stories of Greek mythology, show a nobler religious tinge, yet one cannot but see how far astray the Church has been led by her adoption of them in a too literal and prosaic fashion. St Paul derived from them a doctrine of the Fall, which has had enormous influence on the history of the Church. Whether on the whole that influence has been for good or not we cannot tell, since, if it had not been there, we do not know what would have taken its place. But we see how the survival of the view, amid surroundings to which it is ill adapted, has become an impediment. And from the time of Galileo downwards, almost every great scientific discovery has been regarded by the great authorities of the Church as hostile to Christianity, simply because those authorities cannot cut themselves wholly loose from Jewish primitive views of the nature and the origin of the visible universe, which, one may venture to say, have no more connection with the teaching of Jesus Christ than they have with the dramas of Shakespeare. In this matter, as in all other

phenomena of religion, as well as of politics and ethics, good and evil are intermingled. And it is safest in most cases to think that on the whole, in the long run, good has resulted rather than evil from nearly all the modes of religious belief which have existed in the world. Yet one cannot but feel that there lay ready to hand, even in the Old Testament, a cosmogony with infinitely more natural affinity for Christianity. In a magnificent chapter of *Proverbs* Wisdom is spoken of as the spirit which presided at the creation of the world. 'When the Lord prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass on the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him as a master workman, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.' The writer to the Hebrews must have thought of this passage when he wrote, 'The worlds were framed by the word of God,' the word and wisdom being expressions of like meaning. And that Christ was the Word of God was soon believed. The cosmogony of the Fourth Evangelist and of *Proverbs* has in it nothing with which science can quarrel or which is worn out with time.

We may next consider a feature in the Synoptic Gospels which has been a stumbling-block to many, which probably, at the present moment, keeps back many a good man from full sympathy with Christianity. I mean the constant mention in the narratives of demonic possession and of the cure of demoniacs. It

would seem that in Judæa, at the beginning of our era, the curious psychical and physical phenomena summed up in the word possession were extremely abundant. Many diseases which we regard as the business of the physician were then supposed to result from the usurpation of the bodies of men by evil spirits, who used human organs for their own purposes; and between these intruding demons, and exorcists who tried by various means to expel them, a constant warfare was going on. According to our narratives, Jesus not only accepted as a fact this demonic possession, but also became one of the most successful of exorcists, expelling evil demons from the bodies of which they had taken forcible possession, and giving back those bodies to their rightful possessors.

#### IV

The whole subject of demons and possession is one which can only be satisfactorily dealt with by those who have studied with care and patience the ways of thought and action which prevail among the uncivilized. To the ordinary reader of the Bible it often appears that in this matter Judæa, in the time of the Gospels, was in a strange and unheard-of condition; that a pitched battle, not only for the souls but the bodies of men, was going on between Jesus and His disciples on the one side, and Satan with his angels on the other. They regard every cure of a demoniac as a victory won by the hosts of light. They suppose that after a time the battle was won, and then the hosts of darkness ceased to trouble men with fraud or violence.

Than such a way of looking at the matter, nothing

could be less historical. According to the beliefs of all nations below a certain level of culture, the body of man is a frequent prey to disembodied spirits. There is no barbarous tribe in Africa or America but has its medicine-man, its exorcist, one of whose main duties is the struggle with evil spirits, though often the exorcist is scarcely on a higher level of morality than the spirits to which he is opposed. A hundred phenomena, of which we have quite a different explanation, are in the darker places of the earth attributed to the action of spirits, which interfere in every event of life, guiding men or misleading them, helping or hindering them, conferring success or inflicting injuries, causing diseases or removing them. We know, from early Christian writers, that the same war with demons which marked the life of the Founder of Christianity was continued in the history of the Church; and, if time served, I could cite many passages to prove that the Fathers of the second and third centuries believed as fully in demonic agency as did the contemporaries of Jesus.

Thus the theory of demonic agency in the world was but the explanation, at the time universally received, of certain phenomena of disease, physical and mental; and, of course, the universal belief in the cause coloured all the actual facts. As is always the way in mental and nervous diseases, those who suffered regarded their sufferings in the light of an accepted theory. The demons were heard to speak, they entered and left the bodies in regular ways, they confessed their evil deeds; sometimes they even became visible. All these phenomena were rife among ourselves when witchcraft was believed in, a few centuries



ago. One point, however, is to be noted. Just as spots in the sun seem to mark a time of unusual heat, so a time of spiritual awakening or religious revival is commonly accompanied by a recrudescence of demonic phenomena. This has been seen in many ages—even in the eighteenth century, in connection with the rise of Methodism,—and in some degree in our own days.

It seems to me beyond question that the accounts in our Gospels of the dealings with demoniacs are rendered in some degree less trustworthy by the prevalent convictions as to the nature and the work of demons. No one had any doubts in regard to possession, and so stories which went on the ordinary lines in regard to it would not be suspected, and find a ready acceptance. At the same time, it is most probable that the tales of the cure of demoniacs by Jesus rest in some cases upon fact. There is no evidence that He rejected the ordinary current theory that what we call nervous diseases were the work of evil spirits. And that He should have had power to cure these diseases by words of power and by a spiritual predominance, is perfectly natural. We cannot be sure that in particular cases the details are rightly reported to us; but it would show an unreasonable scepticism to reject as unhistoric all the instances of the healing of demoniacs.

But what is often overlooked is, for our present purpose, most important. If our Lord accepted the hypothesis of the constant action of evil spirits in the human world, He baptized the theory afresh. Among most barbarous peoples there can scarcely be said to be a germ of morality in the views held as to the

working of spirits. The spirits themselves are usually not notably either bad or good; usually untrustworthy and mischievous, sometimes malicious, sometimes, on the whole, innocuous. They have no clear relation to the realm of conduct; nor do the exorcists take a strong ethical line in dealing with them. Usually it is some spell or some recognized mode of treatment which avails to expel the demon. There is a class of people, wizards and witches, who make a business of dealing with demons, are even on familiar terms with them, and in their name levy blackmail on all who have money to spare.

All the higher religions have made war upon sorcery and witchcraft. They have tried to put it down in the name of deities of nobler type. In Greece the guardianship of Apollo or Athena secured one from the attack of evil spirits. And when the Olympic deities began to wane, other spiritual powers, less radiant but still noble, took their place: Mithras, and Sarapis, and Isis. In Judæa, the stern command, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,' shows how the religion of Jehovah trampled upon the remains of barbarous sorcery which, in Palestine, as in all countries, survived among the more remote or less intelligent of the people.

But in the Gospels we have a somewhat different and a higher note. The power of demons is recognized as what it actually appeared to be, a source of infirmity and disease. And the power of the demons was to be broken, not by word or spell, not by priestly interposition or religious ceremony, but by proclamation of the fact that all demonic possession was in

violation of the will of God, was an outrage upon the scheme of things which had been divinely arranged. The woman whom Satan had bound was to be loosed. The spirits which had foully usurped the bodies of men were to be expelled. The expulsion of demons was the work, not only of the Master Himself, but of His disciples. And it was a part of the process of realizing the Kingdom of God which it was the great object of all Christianity to promote.

And further, we may observe in the Gospels that whereas the expulsion of demons may well be regarded as an adaptation to the fixed beliefs of the people rather than a characteristic trait of Christian teaching, in other passages, where we come nearer to the essence of the teaching of the Kingdom, the powers of evil are regarded otherwise: not as the source of danger and disease to the body, but as the inspirers of evil thought and unlawful desire. That evil impulses do arise in our hearts, introduced, as it were, by a whisper from the unseen world, is one of the most fundamental facts of religious psychology, to be read of in all the great works of Christian experience. As there is always waiting at the door of the heart a flood of divine power and illumination, so there is also waiting a crowd of evil suggestions and vile thoughts, which, if indulged, will lead the soul to destruction. What may be, according to scientific investigation, the origin of this tendency to evil, I need not now inquire. It does not at present concern us to investigate this matter any more than it concerns us here to track out the pathology of demonic possession. It is enough that the facts are what they are; and indeed their

solid reality is only too undeniable. As presented to human consciousness, the tempting voice appears to be personal, and it has been thought of as personal through almost all the past history of mankind.

As we all know, in the Jewish story of the Fall, the principle of evil appears, not as a spirit, but as a serpent. It is supposed that the Jews derived their notion of a great Power of Evil ever opposed to the Good Power from the religion of Persia. However that may be, the conception of Satan, with which we meet in the New Testament, has become a thoroughly Christian idea. It interprets the universal tendency to do what is evil in the sight of God, which is one of the greatest of ethical facts. The voice which suggests the indulgence of impure desire, the use of powers divinely given for base or personal ends, the pursuit of one's own will rather than the will of God, is the voice of Satan. The power which opposes the spread in the world of a new and divine enthusiasm is the power of Satan; and when that enthusiasm is victorious, Satan is driven from earth to Hell, where his will is done as is the will of God in heaven. As the Angels of God are present at every crisis of life to protect, to help, and to keep in the way of righteousness, so are the messengers of Satan ever close to us to turn us away from the better course in the direction of the worse, to tempt our feet into the broad way which leads to destruction.

The Christian spirit is reconcilable with many kinds of philosophy and many ways of regarding the world; but it cannot be reconciled with any which does not regard the world as a battle-field, which denies the

existence of evil tendency, and fancies that all is for the best. Christianity, like every ethical system of any value, is essentially dualist. Monism belongs to speculative philosophy, not to any system of practical thought which has, or can have, any power to lead men in the direction of righteousness. All Christians are not indeed bound so fully to accept the personality of Satan as it was accepted in the early Church, but all Christians are bound to accept the truths for which the personal existence of Satan was regarded as an explanation.

## V

It might naturally be supposed that among the elements of Judaism which could not possibly be taken over by Christianity would be the racial feeling, which has among Jews always been so prominent. With this racial feeling, at the time of the rise of Christianity, was closely bound up the expectation of a national expansion and the hope of a great political triumph over the Gentiles. How could this feeling, by its very nature jealous, exclusive, and anti-social, be adopted into a new world-religion? That it actually was taken over and baptized into Christ must be considered one of the most astonishing triumphs of the new faith.

The baptism was the work of St Paul; and the method of it was merely an application of the method of *inwardness*, of that distinction between the flesh and the spirit which was present, at least in essence, from the origin of Christianity. 'He is not a Jew,' writes the Apostle, 'which is one outwardly; neither is that

circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.' Never were uttered bolder words. At a stroke, the feeling of race which had been matured through ages of struggle and persecution, and had become a part of the deepest passions of the Jews, was to be done away, and there was to arise a new Israel, a fresh people of God, set aside, not by blood, but by a living relation to God. Yet such was the astonishing spiritual force of early Christianity, that the new society not only accepted the view of St Paul, but believed it with an unhesitating fervour.

The first suggestion of the change comes in some words of the Gospels attributed to John the Baptist, yet the full bearing of which he can scarcely have realized : ' Think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' These words do not occur in Mark, but in Matthew and Luke ; and one may suspect that in this case the words of John have been somewhat expanded by the Christian consciousness. However that be, the theme thus started goes on and grows stronger and stronger. In the *Epistle of Peter* we read :<sup>1</sup> ' Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.' The words race and nation are here emphatic ; yet the writer, though doubtless a Jew by birth, is not thinking of a race, but of a society ; of a spiritual, not a mere ethnic nation. The Christians, if they seemed on

<sup>1</sup> I., ii., 9.



earth a new sect, had really existed for all time in the councils of God. For them the world had been made, and all the dealings of God with Jewish patriarchs and people had been but a preparation for the rise of the Church.

Throughout the *Epistle to the Romans* St Paul labours this view. Naturally, he divided the people of the world into Jews and Gentiles; but he felt that this distinction was done away in Christ, and that in Christ a new, a third people arose, who were elect, chosen of God, within whose bounds both Jew and Gentile must come, and be made one. And to this new people, according to the teaching of some of the early Christian writers, belonged, of right, not only the Old Testament and the promises of God to the Fathers of Israel, but also the wisdom of the Greeks, the mystic sacraments of Mithras and Isis, the world-wide dominion of Rome. All these really belonged to the Christians; and if evil spirits had stolen and perverted things laid up in the treasury of God for those of the new race, the Christians had a right to demand them back. All things were theirs, past, present, and future, since what was God's was Christ's, and what was Christ's had been given to the Church. Here, indeed, was an empire for the spiritual Israel, greater than any dreamed of by the seers of racial Israel.

And those Israelites who were such after the spirit and not after the flesh mostly accepted the new version of the promised deliverance. But not others. Not only was Paul bitterly persecuted in his lifetime by his own countrymen, but even down to our own

times Jews who have a strong racial feeling hate him with a bitter hatred. While Christianity, thus raised from the material to the spiritual, attracted to itself the more spiritual and idealizing of the Jewish race, it failed to attract those of another and a more literal temperament. Thus, in the first century of our era we find among the Jews a recrudescence of what was narrow and bigoted in their race. Those who rejected Christianity went by a natural revulsion to the opposite pole of religion. Everyone knows the consequences. The outbreak of a national fanaticism led the nation through the frightful tragedy of which we find a terrible record in the pages of Josephus. Historically, the sack of Jerusalem by Titus was the natural consequence of the death on Calvary. And in the centuries following, even down to our own days, the Jewish race has suffered never-ending miseries from the continued working of the same causes. The long martyrdom has not been only suffering; it has had its effect in two directions. It has hardened and narrowed the national type, but it has, at the same time, refined and strengthened it. Even in those elements of Judaism which resisted the influence of Christianity, there was enough good to preserve the race through untold sufferings. And there have continually arisen great Jewish idealists, who, though they were prevented by a hardened race-prejudice from accepting Christianity, or repelled by some of its unlovely developments, yet have carried on in the world the work of Christ.

The residuum which, in any religion or any phase of civilization, has not undergone the transmuting

influence of the Christian enthusiasm, may persist as a permanently hostile force to that enthusiasm, or may, through meeting it under more favourable circumstances, be at a later time baptized into Christ. We shall see in later lectures how more and more of Hellenism has, in successive ages, been absorbed into Christianity, and that that process is even now not complete. With Judaism it is otherwise. The interaction of the Christian and the Jewish spirits was at the very beginning so close and penetrating, that not only was every element in Judaism which would readily amalgamate with the rising religion included, but even many elements which had no real affinity for it. For example, the plenary inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures was from the first accepted by Christianity, and became in many ways one of its most valued tenets. Yet, how was it possible for a Church which did not keep the Jewish law really to regard it as written by the finger of God? All sorts of symbolical and fanciful interpretations thus came into vogue. And at the time of the Reformation the extreme veneration accorded to the Old Testament became a great danger to some branches of the Church.

It is a commonplace to contrast the ready reception accorded at first to Christianity among the Jews with their almost complete absence of conversion to the Christian faith in later times. It is natural that the same phenomenon should appear also as regards the baptism of Jewish ideas into Christianity after the first age.

## LECTURE IV

### THE BAPTISM OF HELLAS

WHEN we come to the subject of the baptism into Christianity of Hellenic civilization, we reach a large as well as a difficult subject. This baptism was not the work of the Founder during His sojourn on earth. Here, at all events, 'Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples.' It was a work which occupied whole generations: which, in fact, at the present day is not completed. The relations of Christianity to Hellenism have been the great intellectual interest of the history of the Church. Christianity started as a reformed and spiritual kind of Judaism. Unless it had had vital force sufficient to grapple with and to absorb what was good and enduring in the existing civilization, it would have remained a mere Jewish sect. Indeed, in the infant Church which was collected at Jerusalem under the presidency of James, about the year 40, there might not, to a sceptical investigator, have been apparent any cosmopolitan elements. The question, humanly speaking, was whether it should adapt itself to its environment, or whether it should perish?

The adaptation of Christianity to a Hellenistic environment was, of course, largely the work of St Paul. There is, however, no justification of the notion that St Paul so translated Christianity as to make of it practically a new religion. There is no ground for supposing that he could, under any circumstances, have originated a religion. He was a chosen vessel, a vehicle of untold value; but he was a vehicle. The spirit of Christianity worked in and through him; but he was the conduit, not the fountain. For, in the first place, we find in the early Church others working on the same lines; and though he overshadows them all, yet if he had been absent they might have been more conspicuous. There was the Deacon Stephen, and Apollos, and Philip the Evangelist. We have still better evidence in a treatise which has survived, the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the author of which shows considerable independence of view, though he may generally be regarded as a follower of St Paul.

But we must look beyond mere individuals. In the great ages of the world individuals are but the instruments which are used by ideas and tendencies. If Paul had never become a Christian, the work he did would have been done by others; and no one felt this more strongly than the Apostle himself. He was always conscious that he was but a channel of an inspiration which came from above. He was anxious to merge all his words, his feelings, and his acts in the stream of tendency by which he was borne along. And when he tried to explain the source of his inspiration he affirmed that everything was the doing of the spirit of Christ Jesus, revealed alike in his own soul and to

the consciousness of the Church. On this subject, however, I need not here speak further.

## I

It is a great misfortune that the classical education given in our schools and universities is so partial and so patchy. We learn something of the history and the literature of Greece and Rome when these were at their best; but we do not study Greece and Rome or ancient civilization as a whole. To us the history of the pre-Christian age appears, as it were, in a series of disconnected tableaux, and we do not observe the laws of growth and decay which cause one of these tableaux to pass into another. When we are investigating the relations between early Christianity and contemporary civilization, this defect in our education acts very perniciously. Not so much in the case of Rome, for the age of the first Cæsars is the age of dawning Christianity; but we inveterately try to interpret the Judæa of that age by help of the written Law and Prophets which came into being many centuries before. Any reader must recognize how different is the atmosphere of some of the later Psalms written in the Maccabean age from that of Jeremiah or the *Books of Samuel*. But the observation, not being reinforced with knowledge, soon dies away.

When we have to do with Greece the case is still worse. Our young men are taught to read Homer; and they have a fairly complete introduction to the great fifth century literature of Athens, the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the philosophy of Plato. A few later



writers, such as Demosthenes, Aristotle, and Theocritus, come into the curriculum. Having thus formed an estimate of the spirit of classical Greece, students compare the writings of the New Testament with Hellenic literature. And they not unnaturally soon perceive that between these works and those there is a great gulf; that the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit lie far apart. So they try to keep their religion, which is founded on the New Testament, in a different part of the mind from their literary culture, which is largely founded on Greek ideas.

Now the New Testament is full of Jewish ideas; but they are generally the ideas of the Maccabean age rather than of the age of the Kings and the Prophets. And the New Testament, in important parts of it, is full of Greek or semi-Greek ideas; but they are not those of the great Athenian writers, but those of ordinary people of five centuries later. These centuries had been full of growth and of change. In their course Athens had completed the cultivation of Greece, and set about the education of the world. In the age of Alexander the Great and his successors, the waters of Greek civilization had flowed as if from a reservoir, and had inundated all the lands bordering the Mediterranean. Naturally, as this flood spread widely, it grew shallow, and it was mixed in every country with all sorts of national and local elements. But still there had arisen in all the Levant a more or less homogeneous culture. Greek was not only the language of ordinary discourse in the great new cities like Alexandria and Antioch, but it was the language of educated men everywhere, almost more

than was Latin in mediæval Europe. And with the language went an enormous body of literature, poetic, historic, philosophic, scientific, of which very little remains to us, but which must have had an unmeasured influence. We know from modern analogies how vast is the effect on any country of the acceptance from another of a standard literature—such an influence as France has exerted on Belgium, or England in the last century on America. Into every town there penetrated the Greek schoolmaster or philosopher trying to bring in reason and discourse. In Asia Minor and Syria, Greek civic institutions began to make way and cities to have an active, corporate life. In the collections of Greek inscriptions we have an almost endless record of the decrees passed by senates and assemblies of the Greek cities. And though these decrees are usually about trifles, since the strong hand of Rome would not allow real political power to any of the cities of the East, yet they prove that the forms of civic government were carefully treasured, and officials with high-sounding titles were appointed to perform duties of no great importance. The machinery was at work, though it only produced toys; and it was possible for the early Christians to imitate this machinery, and at the same time to turn it to more serious purpose.

Christianity, coming in contact with the Greece of the Hellenistic age, was compelled either to absorb it, or at least what in it could be reconciled with Christianity, or else be absorbed by it. The Gnostics would have absorbed Christianity into Hellenism; but it was the opposite process which, in a broad view,

took place. However, it was impossible for Christianity to absorb the real Hellas, the Hellas of Pericles and Epaminondas, for the undeniable reason that at the beginning of the Christian era the real early Hellas had passed away.

## II

The religion of Greece, like that of all countries of which I have any knowledge, was really not one but several. There were in it strata, corresponding to the strata of the population. Three strata we may clearly recognize. First: there was the religion of the poets and of the artists; the beautiful and orderly worship of an Olympus, of an assembly of gods which were the personified powers of Nature—Zeus, Apollo, Athena, and the rest. Second: there was the religion of the masses, largely tinged with superstition and materialism, uncivilized, and yet containing in it many great religious ideas which the world could not afford to lose. Third: there was the religion of the philosophers, not merely theistic but monotheistic, with very noble and lofty ideas of the divine nature. Speaking in a summary way, we may say that the Greek Olympus was not baptized into Christianity, but that the popular religious beliefs of the masses were in a great measure absorbed by Christianity, and that Greek philosophy also found a long resting-place in the Church.

When Greek religion is mentioned, the mind of the hearer at once turns to the splendid court of Olympus familiar to us through Homer and the great Attic literature. We think of Apollo and his oracle at

Delphi, of Zeus and the great festival of Olympia, of Athena and all that she represented to the city of Athens. Our minds turn to the brilliant city festivals in honour of the gods, to sacrifices and ceremonies, to temples full of dedicated offerings, and priesthoods of great dignity. Such was the religion of Greece in the classical age. But all this pomp and splendour, closely related to poetry and art, had very little influence on Christianity. The life of real belief had departed from it for centuries. Festivals and ceremonies were retained in a spirit of conservatism and civic rivalry; but beneath their show there was little conviction. Even in Greece itself the worship of Zeus and Apollo and the other great deities of Olympus had grown pale. When we turn the pages of the travels of Pausanias, who visited Greece in the second century A.D., and read of all the treasures of art preserved in the great temples, of the local religious legends kept up with duteous care, of the festivals handed down from immemorial times and still celebrated with pomp and majesty, it is not easy at first to realize how little life lay behind this seeming. In fact, in the great cities of Greece, state religion was closely bound up with civic existence, and so long as the cities still retained some vestiges of autonomy they kept up their religious usages. And the respectable citizens cultivated religion with other civic virtues. Religion, as we all know, may exist for a long while in a country in a state of suspended animation, without much influence on life and conscience.

The real test of Greek religion had come at the time when the astonishing campaigns of Alexander

had laid all that was known of Asia at his feet, and the Greek and Macedonian passed from country to country of Asia as master, as educator, and as organizer. The empires of the successors of Alexander were held together by the chains of Greek cities which they founded, and which served as channels to introduce into the heart of Asia the knowledge and the commerce of Greece.

The one thing which the Macedonian rulers wanted to give coherency and permanency to their rapidly formed kingdoms, was some satisfactory form of religion. Into the great cities of their dominions the kings of Syria and Pergamon could easily import the cults of the Greek cities whence they came. And to these cults they could give official patronage and prestige; but they could not give them real vitality, nor enable them to spread from the cities to the countries round. Whenever the imported Greek cults came into collision with a strong living religion, as in Judæa and among the Zoroastrians of Persia, they completely failed. The cults which best maintained themselves were those which had close connection with Oriental religion, like the cult of Artemis at Ephesus; or those which fell in with the ways of the time, like the worship of the Tyche or Fortune of cities and of kings, a worship which was really the transference of religious cult to worldly powers.

Greek Paganism being thus far past its prime, and unsuited to the surroundings of the age, could offer but little resistance to the new Gospel of the divine will. The teaching of a plurality of deities, by no means always on terms one with the other, was in-

stinctively felt to be in contradiction with the facts of the world. Monotheism had long prevailed in the world of thought, and was in various forms making its way even among the people. The spread of more exact and scientific thought had made it impossible to any thinking man to suppose the powers of Nature to be governed by partiality and caprice; and the profound demoralization which had resulted when the balance of the world was upset by Alexander, had made men extremely sceptical as to the power of ancestral deities to protect their worshippers. In poetry, the tradition of the Hellenic Pantheon held its own for ages; and, in fact, almost down to our own days. But poetry is often the ghost of dead religion; and it was the inevitable effect of the unrivalled poetry of Homer that the religion which had inspired it should be accepted by poets, when it was moribund and decaying.

No doubt in Christian martyrologies, and other works of the kind, one hears a good deal of old Greek cults as persisting. And in the small towns and country districts of really Hellenized lands, a great deal of obstinate conservatism might cling about them; but certainly their vitality was low. And the test usually applied to the Christians was rather whether they would sacrifice at the altar of the emperor, than whether they would acknowledge some heathen deity; for politics was more serious than religion.

Certainly Christianity did borrow some things from the local cults of Greece and Asia Minor. When victorious, she took some spoils from the vanquished; but the borrowings did not concern larger matters of



doctrine or of organization, but rather may be traced in the details of local worship. In a brilliant paper Mr Rendel Harris has shown that the Christian pair, Florus and Laurus, in Asia Minor succeeded to some of the worship paid to Castor and Pollux. This process was far spread. In a hundred cases we find some Christian saint succeeding to the shrine and the honours of a local deity. Thus at one shrine we find St Elias succeeding Helios the sun-god; and at another Apollo, the slayer of the python, gives way to St George. The Parthenon of Athena was by the Christians dedicated first to the divine Sophia or wisdom, then to the Virgin-Mother. This process, however, interesting as it is, is not of any great moment to the general history of Christianity. It lies at a level below that of the higher religion and the writings of the Christian Fathers. It is scarcely necessary on this occasion to investigate it further.

No doubt, also, the popular religion of Greece made great contributions to the Christian demonology. It is the usual course of religious history that when a Pantheon is worsted in its own country its members sink to the rank of sprites or demons, in which form they long continue to live in the superstitions of the people, like the Venus of Wagner. But if we wish to trace any valuable and fruitful influence exercised on Christianity by her early rivals, we must look in another direction rather than at the great civic cults. We must investigate the relations of Christianity to the religions of the family and the clan, to the new mystic cults which had sprung up or risen to a new level in the Hellenistic age, and to cults such as that

of Aesculapius which had been strongly affected by them. On these subjects I shall speak in the next two lectures. But first it is necessary to say a few words as to the debt of Christianity to that philosophy which at the time was the religion of the educated classes. Philosophy, though it had existed in India for ages before it arose in Greece, was yet an intensely Greek development.

### III

Nothing could be more natural than that St Paul, inheriting from his Jewish ancestry tendencies strongly opposed to the mental habits of the Greeks, and heated with the flush of a passionate new faith, should speak of the philosophy of the Greeks as a thing which was of no value for the spiritual life. The world, he said, by philosophy attained to no knowledge of God; the Greeks who sought for wisdom found in the cross of Christ nothing but foolishness; the wisdom of man attained not to the righteousness of God. He regarded the methods and the results of Greek thought as things to be thrown wholly aside, to be sacrificed to Christ and nailed to His cross. 'Where,' he asked, 'is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?' St Paul owed to Greek philosophy more than he knew of, but he did not acknowledge the debt. In some of the speeches attributed to him in *Acts*, and in some of his genuine Epistles, this appears clearly. He had a philosophy of religion in which the revelation of God to the Gentiles had a part as well as the revelation to the Jews. Though

we may regard the account in *Acts* of Paul's speech at Athens, with its appeal to Greek philosophy and Athenian cultus, as not to be entirely relied on, yet the whole of the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians is an attempt to think out the place of revelation in God's dealings with man, and in the facts of human life. St Paul was so original a thinker, and so little influenced by the traditions of the schools, that some parts of his view belong to the peculiarities of his nature and his circumstances, and could scarcely have a future. But the problems which he attempted were taken up by others after an interval.

The relations between Greek philosophy and Christian teaching form the main intellectual interest in the history of Christianity. The Church had soon settled her relations with Judaism; determined what she would take and what she would leave. But her relations with Hellas were far more enduring and more complicated. Through all ages Greece has been the Helen of the nations, whose fascinating beauty none can wholly resist. Over and over again has the Christian spirit tried to tear itself away from the charmer, but ever it has returned. In the course of church history we can trace the influence of all the moods of Hellenic thought, from the time of Socrates to that of Plotinus. But this influence comes in an order almost opposite to that of history. In the first centuries of Christianity, it is the contemporary Greek philosophy which touches and influences the rational developments of the teaching of the Church. At Alexandria, a sort of compromise or syncretism between living philosophy and living Christianity is effected.

When complete, this syncretism is embalmed and preserved. It cannot be further developed, because Greek philosophy has died, and the power of Christian thought is obscured in the age of partial darkness. Then in scholasticism there is a sudden reversion from Dionysius and Plotinus to Aristotle; and, at the Renaissance, a revival of the still earlier teaching of Plato and Socrates. The waves of scholastic discussion and of Platonic revival have by no means yet died down, least of all perhaps at Oxford, where the *Ethics* of Aristotle and the *Republic* of Plato are still chief textbooks in the schools, and are made a life-long possession of most of the abler of the men who there pursue their studies.

It is in bare outline only that I can sketch the phases of the process whereby Greek philosophy was baptized into the faith of Christ. It is a process which began with St Paul and the Fourth Evangelist, and is in our day scarcely yet complete. There are even now elements in the Greek wisdom which have never been baptized, and by the acquisition of which our faith might be made richer and more human. But, on the other hand, no part of Christian doctrine more urgently requires revision than that which is ultimately of Hellenic origin. It is a realm of ghosts of the mighty dead, of gigantic ruins, of constructions which look strong to a superficial regard, but are really crumbled away inwardly.

It is not easy to separate in treatment the speculative from the practical side of Greek philosophy. In the age of the Christian origins, theory and practice were closely intermingled. Yet it is desirable to

attempt a separation, and to speak first of philosophy in its more speculative and afterwards in its more practical aspects.

The task of amalgamating Greek and Semitic religious elements was accomplished at Alexandria by the pious Jew, Philo, at the very beginning of the Christian era. We cannot be surprised to find that just as Jerome recognizes Seneca as a Christian moralist, so Eusebius treats Philo as the earliest of the Christian Fathers. In regard to speculative questions as to the person of the Deity and His relations to the world, it is almost impossible to draw a line between Philo on one side and the early Christian theologians and apologists on the other. The writer of the Fourth Gospel stands very near to Philo, though there may well have been no conscious borrowing. It is true that we find in Philo an abstract and fanciful tendency, an extreme love of symbolical interpretation, a want of clearness, which make his writings a not very satisfactory subject of study. One cannot easily divine his real meaning; and when his meaning is traced, it usually seems very remote from practical life. But if we set aside the Fourth Evangelist, a man of almost unique spiritual genius, we shall find no little of these same qualities and tendencies in the speculative writings of early Christianity. Philo had introduced the notion of the Logos, as a means for connecting a transcendent Deity with the world, without staining His perfection. Not unlike the spirit of Philo is that of the Christian apologists of the second century. With them the Logos is the Organ of creation, of all revelation, who is further incorporated as the human Christ,

and who brings to men not only a fresh revelation of God, but the only satisfactory philosophy—a salvation of man from speculative doubt. Small indeed is the interest which the apologists, even Justin the Martyr, take in the human life of Christ. What they care for is a Logos-philosophy, and in some of them even the name of Jesus does not occur.

At the time, it was quite impossible for anyone who thought in a speculative way to think otherwise than according to the methods and the formulæ which Plato and his successors had introduced as a sort of grammar of the art of thought. As is always the way when a science is made methodic, a number of technical words, which at once abridge and control the process of thinking, had made their way into philosophy; such contrasts as that between the formal and the material, between original and final causes, between ethos and pathos, had become familiar, and words like being, becoming, embodiments, emanations, hypostases, were in general use in the schools and in the market-places, where many of the discussions took place. From the very first, as we have seen, the subject of supreme interest to the Christian community was the nature of the person of its Founder, and His relation to the one God; and this question could not be seriously discussed in any of the cities of Greece or Italy or Asia without use of Greek philosophic terms and argument. Some eminent modern theologians have regretted the triumph of metaphysics in early Christianity. I venture to think that this view is historically not to be defended. For what were the alternatives? Was it possible for the early Christians



to take up a position of agnosticism, and openly to declare that their experience of the presence of their Founder's spirit was sufficient for them quite apart from any intellectual theory in regard to it? Such an attitude of mind would have been an effectual bar to keep out of the Church not only all intelligent Greeks, but all cultivated men. To that age metaphysical speculation was what science is to us, or even what science and philosophy together are to us.

We cannot regret that the eager Christian intellect in the second and third centuries found a field for its exercise in the tenets of the faith. A succession of Christian doctors, from the time of St Paul onwards, translated or baptized into Christianity the philosophic speculations which had acted on the whole so beneficially in the Græco-Roman world. But philosophy was no docile catechumen ready to lay aside all that it had believed, and to accept the faith of Christ in humility. It was a world-power, full of intellectual pride and ambition, and accustomed not to learn but to teach. Early in the second century there was a great and memorable attempt made, instead of baptizing philosophy into Christ, to draw Christianity into the field of philosophy. Such was the task which the Gnostic teachers set before themselves.

Harnack has called Gnosticism the acute or excessive Hellenization of Christianity. It was, however, largely mixed with Oriental elements. To a hasty study there may seem no great difference between the theological theories of the Fourth Evangelist and those of the Gnostics. The *Apocalypse* was by some writers supposed to be the work of the Gnostic Cerinthus.

The Gnostic Marcion had an extreme veneration for the writings of St Paul. But things superficially alike are often in principle very dissimilar. There ran a line between Christianity and Pagan philosophy; and the question was whether Christianity or philosophy should be dragged across that line into the territory and the power of the enemy?

To the modern mind this conflict may be most readily understood by recurring to our original thesis, that baptism into Christ was an adoption into the higher life of the Church, which carried on upon earth the divine obedience of Christ. Gnosticism would have evaporated Christianity into a theory or a set of theories, which would try to explain the origin of the world, the nature of Christ, the character of sin, and the process of redemption, but would lose the life-blood of self-surrender. It was on the practical side—understanding of the nature of will, and respect for fact—that Gnosticism was defective. Like the philosophy of Hegel in our own day, Gnosticism would resolve ethical and spiritual life into a rational cosmic process.

Gnosticism perished through a want of inner vitality, and left the world of thought to be fought for by two powers which joined issue over its corpse. On the one side contended the revived Pagan enthusiasm which appeared in philosophy as Neo-Platonism, and in the field of politics inspired the Emperor Julian. On the other side stood the learned and able Christian Fathers of Alexandria, Clement and Origen, and those who followed them, who were not merely Christian writers, but thinkers worthy to be compared with

ancient philosophers of any school. Alexandria passed on Christian philosophy to Augustine in Numidia; and Augustine not only to the great European leaders, but to subsequent ages, as we shall see later.

What we have a good right to regret, is, that with philosophic speculation in Christianity there was mingled so much of baser human alloy. In so far as that speculation embodied the intellectual side of the life of the Church, it was necessary to her vitality. That it suffered from such faults as too great love of abstract terms, too strong a rhetorical bent, ignorance of the actual limits of our knowledge, was quite natural and at the time inevitable. But, unfortunately, there were mingled with it other elements of baser origin and greater power for corruption. Clerical jealousies and rivalries constantly intruded themselves; there was a strong tendency to make concession to superstition for the sake of popular support; and, in particular, the politics of the Empire had continual effect on the shaping of doctrine. Nicene orthodoxy triumphed not merely by any intrinsic superiority in spirituality or as regards Christian life, but largely in consequence of the decree of Theodosius, who, in 380, declared it the only orthodox Christian faith. Questions of orthodoxy and of local patriotism were inextricably intermixed. It was certainly no purely intellectual conviction, and certainly no spiritual enthusiasm, which made the mobs of Constantinople and of Alexandria wild with enthusiasm for certain metaphysical unintelligibilities, and bitterly hostile to others. How can we, in a very different age and amid quite changed surroundings, feel in any way committed to

decisions obtained from councils by such means as were freely used by the contending leaders?

However, the subject before us is not the infallibility of church councils or of the recognized creeds, but the way in which the Church baptized into Christ the best of Greek speculative thought. There were before the Renaissance two great ages of speculative theology. The first was dominated by the successors of Plato; indeed, one may fairly say that where St Paul moves on un-Platonic lines, in his doctrines of predestination, of sin and grace, he failed greatly to influence the Church until the time of Augustine. The second period, which begins in the depth of the Middle Ages, was dominated by the writings of Aristotle, which came to Europe, in part, through the instrumentality of great Arabian philosophers, and soon had great influence in the universities. It gives one a vivid impression of the dominance of the Greek mind in the world of thought, that the teaching of Aristotle should first convince the Mohammedan conquerors of Asia and Spain, and thence pass on to Bologna, Paris, and Oxford. And in turn Aristotle was conquered and made tributary by the great living religions of the Middle Ages, Islam and Christianity, which took all that they could adapt and use of him in order to organize and express their own thought.

#### IV

We have seen that in the case of Judæa the unabsorbed or unbaptized residuum was of no great account in the world's history. In the case of Greece

the loss to Christianity has been very different. There the residuum has been of untold value: Greek philosophy the Church did take in; the early Hellenic religion it could not be expected to accept. But the misfortune is that with the religion of Hellas was rejected a noble civilization which was indeed intertwined with Greek religion, yet which went far beyond it. Literature, science, and art were all among the gifts of Greece to the world. The free spirit of inquiry and of enjoyment, the love of the true and the beautiful, belong for all time first of all to Greece. She raised the culture, not indeed of the world, but of certain small societies and even of certain cities, to a height before undreamed of and since seldom attained. The very name of Hellas stands to this day for all that is simple, charming, ideal in poetry and in art, for all that is free in thought and speculation, for the love of soundness and health in mind and body.

This is what Greece represents to us. But we must never forget that this Greece never came into direct contact with Christianity. In the three centuries which preceded Christianity the delightful bloom which seems to adorn the pages of Herodotus and Sophocles passed away; the Greek world lost the freshness of youth and grew old and hypochondriac. Christianity could not bring back this fulness of healthy vitality. Greece was buried, to rise again at the time of the Renaissance of Europe in the fifteenth century, and then to appear as a spirit hostile to Christianity, belonging to the world and not to the spirit.

But could the gospel of health, enjoyment, and



beauty, of mental freedom and self-development, which belonged to early Hellas, ever have been brought into harmony with the gospel of self-denial and the spiritual life taught by the Founder of Christianity? I am not at all sure that it could not. It would have needed baptism, a thorough internal change and renewal; but at least something in it is not irreconcilable with the essence of Christianity. Whole passages of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, breathe a fresh delight in life and in our natural surroundings, an appreciation of the beauty of the world and the charm of human character which is by no means contrary to the spirit of Greece.

In fact, it is really another form of the same spirit of health which is evident in the dealings of Jesus with disease. This is clear from the narrative of the healing of the palsied woman in Luke xiii. The ruler of the synagogue protested because the healing was on the sabbath day, and Jesus answered him with indignation, 'Ought not this woman, whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?' The removal of disease was a good work, because all disease was contrary to the divine will. We may compare every illness to a pebble in the bed of a river, which tends to stop its flow, the removal of which makes the stream in a minute degree faster and smoother. Surely our Lord in thus teaching approved the Greek gospel of health, and at the same time consecrated it by bringing it into immediate relation to the will of God. How different would have been the history of Christianity if the Church had adopted this view of disease and physical degeneracy, instead of the



view that God finds pleasure in physical pain and suffering!

Perhaps even the teaching of St Paul, prone as he is to be hard upon the body, was not wholly adverse to the passion for physical health and beauty. Is it not St Paul who tells his converts that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, temples which must be kept free from corruption by physical lust? We have here the true principle, though we could scarcely expect a Hebrew to realize that principle in all its fulness. Surely, if our bodies are temples, it is not enough that they should be kept free from defilement and from profane revels! It is a starved and narrow race which will be content with a white-washed barn for a temple. Temples should be well adorned with sculpture and painting, with song and music; should be made beautiful for the sake of Him who dwells within. A beautiful and healthy body is surely a more appropriate dwelling for God than a deformed and weakly one. The latter may, indeed, by the spirit within, be transformed into a beauty not robust but yet attractive. Yet health and vigour are really in accord with the will of God, and the gospel of the divine will cannot despise them without revolting against the very conditions of our humanity.

Afterwards, under the influence of asceticism, views such as those of Jesus and His immediate successors died away in the Church more and more, until not only was beauty in man and woman regarded as a snare, but even cleanliness was considered to be unfit for one devoted to religion.

The fact is that, if the spirit of original Christianity

be as I have described it, there is a marked parallelism between it and the spirit of Greek literature and art. The subordination of nature to man, of things visible and tangible to the human spirit, could scarcely be carried further than it was carried in Greece. It was man and man alone that profoundly interested the Greek poet and sculptor. Even his own beautiful country was to him but the background to the drama of humanity. Socrates called back thought from the speculation about material things to the study of man, the nature of happiness and of virtue, the character of individuals and of societies. The Greek painter and sculptor scarcely troubles himself to represent anything but the human form and face. In the Attic drama, as it appeared in the theatre of Dionysus, background was nothing and dress conventional ; it is the tragic course of events with its effect on the life of man which is the subject of interest. Even to the Greek historian mere fact of history is but a stone to build into a purposeful palace of art.

Nor does the Greek in any of his literary or artistic efforts stop short at the visible and tangible. With him, what is seen is but the embodiment of an idea. Behind the individual athlete or soldier the sculptor sees the type ; through the beauty of many women he reaches out towards women's beauty as an ideal. To the painter the group does not consist of so many figures each represented as an individual ; but it is a whole, with one thought penetrating every part, and ranging the composition like the petals of a flower or the facets of a crystal. The heroes of Homer are types ; so are the characters of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

Even in the later age of Greece the rural scenes of Theocritus are no Dutch pictures, but scenes of an ideal Arcady, where everyone is young, happy, and music-loving.

In their own way the ideas of Greek literature and art are ideas of God, as much a part of the higher and spiritual order as even the ideas of a Paul or a Francis. They represent not that which is in a particular place at a particular moment, but that which might be and should be, that which exists in the Divine thought, in heaven rather than on earth. These poets and artists are causing the Kingdom of God to descend and His will to be done on earth. It is a mistake to confuse the love of beauty with sensualism, for sensualists soon lose the sense of beauty. To appreciate true beauty a man must live an abstemious life in the closest communion with what is healthy and natural. Of course as individuals the Greeks often fell into sensuality, though scarcely into the bestial sensuality of the degenerate Romans. But in the great age of Greece, the healthy mind in the healthy body appears to have been more usual than anywhere else.

As we have seen, the Christian enthusiasm proceeds from reading the world in terms of humanity to reading humanity in the light of the relation of man to God. At this latter point, of course, its superiority to the gospel of Hellas is strongly marked. If Christianity had baptized the real Hellas, it would have been by the addition of this element. Hellas had indeed gone far in the very opposite direction, and had read the divine element in life in very human

terms. Not only did the forces of Nature present themselves to the Greek imagination in the likeness of men and women, but even the most august and dignified members of the Pantheon—Zeus, Apollo, and Athena—were represented, as art grew to its climax, in more and more human guise. To the Greeks the gods did indeed ‘come down in the likeness of men,’ not only in beauteous human form, but by no means free from human weakness and passion. Even the philosophers, who approached nearer and nearer to monotheism, had no difficulty in accepting in daily life the usages of the state cultus: their universal deity was rather a cold abstraction in the background than the Father of Spirits, and a very present help in trouble.

The cultivation of mind and body was wedded to Hellenic religion; but in truth it did not owe very much to that association, beyond the occasions of athletic games and musical contests. A far larger debt was in fact owed by the religion of Apollo and Zeus to the Greek natural love of the beautiful, and this was a direct gift of God to the race: a gift as naturally belonging to its deeper nature as did the sense of the spiritual belong to the Jew. It is true that when religion decayed in Hellas, art and literature, the sense of form and fine taste, decayed also. But it cannot be said that we have here cause and effect. Rather, the decay in all its phases came from a national degeneracy and apostacy. Matthew Arnold has said that Greece died of faithfulness to her mission. We may reply, in the first place, that Greece is not dead, and can never die, since the Greek spirit

survives in European civilization ; and in the second place we may answer that, as a nation, Greece perished through what was evil in her, not through what was good, through intestine quarrels, the growth of luxury, love of money, and the other vices which have destroyed many nations before and since. If Greek religion had been strong enough to check these evils, the decay might have been stayed. As it was, a few noble souls remained at a high level ; but the mass of the people fell away, and the race died of anæmia.

At the time of the Renaissance, Greece was in a sense born again. But it was an irreligious Greece. Greek piety and Greek idealism were lost ; so that Greek freedom became an occasion of lawlessness, and Greek love of beauty an occasion for sensuous enjoyment. In that age there were some who, like Milton, could combine the love of beauty with Christian and even Puritan morality ; but they were few. And generally speaking, in the modern world we see the spirit of Hellas and the Christian spirit in opposite camps. This is profoundly to be deplored. The loss of the influence of Hellas in our lives would debase and narrow them beyond imagination. It would be giving up a great part of our spiritual patrimony, a narrowing of the range of the ideal which would profoundly injure the character of Europe.

The Roman Church made war on the Greek revival, and the great Reformers had little sympathy with it. But yet from time to time, in the Christian churches, there has been some attempt to combine the freedom and beauty of Greece with the spirituality of Christianity. Some effort has been made to baptize

into Christ that side of the spirit of Hellas which is the best gift of Hellas to the world. Of one such attempt I have been a witness, for I am a pupil of Maurice and of Kingsley. That school has few representatives in our days. Is it too much to hope that it may yet revive, and fill a deep need in the Christianity of to-day? One of the great defects and dangers of popular Christianity in England is its tendency to what is morbid, to petty asceticism in eating and drinking, to a deadness to the beauties of nature and the aspirations of art, to acquiescence in a low level of mental and bodily existence. Yet the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and very keenly alive to the beauty of nature and of human character. Greece has for us in these days as clear a message as Judæa; and both one and the other may contribute more in the future than in the past to the perfection of the Christian life.



## LECTURE V

### THE BAPTISM OF ASIA

IT appears that an influence upon Christianity even greater than that of Hellas was exercised by an older and deeper stratum of belief. When the Greeks brought with them into Hellas from the north their poetic pantheon, it lay upon the surface of a great morass or sea of religion belonging to the older inhabitants of Greece and Asia Minor, whom they conquered but did not absorb. The classic lands of this religion were Egypt and Babylon; and from such centres the influence spread wide and deep over all parts of the Levant. Much of it was incorporated in the local cults and religious customs of Asia Minor. Babylon was, if we go back far enough, a great religious metropolis, as much so as Rome or Mecca in later ages.

#### I

I can at present speak of the religions of the Hellenistic world, of Isis, Mithras, and Cybele, only in the somewhat novel forms in which they came forth

to claim the adhesion of mankind. But though they might appear novel to Greek writers, they owed their power to roots which stretched far back into the soil of primitive religion. They were really in essentials a reversion to type; though, as always happens in such cases, the new forms differed in appearance from the old.

Religion is a harvest which grows naturally in the soil of the human heart. When a particular interpretation of religious fact and tendency is outworn, and no longer serves its purpose, a fresh growth, starting from the primary facts of the religious life, will spring up to take its place. Thus, at the time of the rise of Christianity in the Hellenistic world the cultus of ancient oriental deities in new forms had come in, as that of the Greek deities had become formal and empty. And in some places the worship of the Greek deities had taken a new lease of life by borrowing elements from the invading religions. We may fairly call the result of the contact between the mystic religions of Hellenism and Christianity the baptism of Asia.

Over the names given by men to the deities of the mystic cults we need not linger. It is not the names, nor even the historic source, which is of great moment to us; we need to penetrate beyond names and appearances to fact and to idea. The worship of Sabazius and of Cybele, which came from Phrygia in Asia Minor, that of Sarapis and Isis which was of Egyptian origin, that of Mithras which came westward from Persia, were all rivals for the favour of mankind. All had many elements in common, and their

introduction and rapid growth in popular favour indicates the opening of a new chapter in the religion of the western world. In setting forth these elements, I shall be obliged to speak in general terms. And doubtless, in such a case, generality involves inaccuracy. The differences between these various religions are, from the historic point of view, as important as their resemblances. But my subject is not the religions of the Hellenistic world as such, but those religions as seen from the standpoint of early Christianity. And from this standpoint their likenesses are more in evidence than their points of difference.

It is an interesting question what part of the later religious cults and tendencies came from old and what part from new sources. The question is not an easy one. To my thinking the answer is as follows. In Greece and Asia Minor, as in most countries, there were various strata of population, belonging probably to quite different ethnological stocks, and certainly at very different stages of culture. The Greeks whom we know, the Greeks of literature and philosophy and art, were an intellectual élite, probably of purer blood, certainly of rare natural endowment. The Olympic religion, like the Homeric poems and the Attic tragedy, was the creation of the spirit of this race, formed out of a mass of heterogeneous materials, and rounded off into a beautiful whole. But with the sad decay of the Greek race, in the centuries immediately preceding our era, this fair construction lost its beauty and its convincing power. And as the higher religion died, the more popular and more emotional elements of popular belief, which had always been

present, especially among the races of Asia Minor, came up to the surface. And undoubtedly there were here important elements of belief which the world could not afford to lose: a sense of sin, a need of divine forgiveness and help, a doctrine of the future life. Such elements as these had not been very prominent in the artistic and articulate religion of Olympus, and the time had come for their fuller and fresher embodiment.

The time had come; and the sudden and wide spread of Hellenism furnished the opportunity, since it mingled class with class, destroying the old rigid patrician lines, and it brought the more inquisitive and enterprising spirits of Greece into the presence of other religions of great antiquity and great repute. The Greek mind made acquaintance with the mystic materialism of Cybele in central Asia Minor. It met the ancient worship of Isis in Egypt, in a land where the thought of the people seemed to turn naturally from the present life to that of the future, to the eternal abodes where spirits dwelt under the guardianship of Osiris and Isis. It came in contact with the Persian religion of light and darkness, a religion destined for centuries to have a profound effect upon the beliefs of Europe. It was brought even into the presence of the strange ascetic religion of the sages of India, a religion more intellectual than any then existing in the world, except possibly that of some of the sects of Greek philosophy.

It was, I think, the contact between the wild religion, so to speak, which existed beneath the polished and civilized surface of Hellenistic society,

and the great and ancient faiths of Persia, Egypt, and Asia Minor, which gave birth to the enthusiastic cults of later Greece, the Isiac, Mithraic, and other religions, which certainly belonged in some respects to the same class as Christianity, and which were for centuries her rivals in the provinces of the Roman Empire.

Perhaps the most striking and essential feature of all these religions was that they appealed not to the community but to the individual. All the religions which up to that time had held sway in Greece had made their appeal not to the individual, but to the clan or the city. When a clan became a ruling caste, or a city controlled an empire, the deity which belonged to either might become national, like the Assyrian Asshur or the Roman Jupiter. But, primarily, it was ever the gens or tribe to which the god appertained. He was the bond between the various members, and stood for their ideal unity; in his worship their united personality found expression. Thus there was no clear dividing line between religion on the one side, and loyalty to one's relatives or one's fellow-citizens on the other. An Athenian who despised the festival of Athena, an Ephesian who did not resort to the temple of the great goddess Artemis, failed as much in patriotism as in religion. The man who did not cultivate, at least with all outward honour, the deity of his clan or family became an outcast from the clan. In one sense it might be said that the god was the property of the clan, in another that the clan was the possession of the god, bound to bring to him offerings at all stated seasons, dependent upon him for aid against rivals and enemies.

In such a state of things there could be no spirit of proselytism. Those who were adopted into the clan were adopted into the religion of the clan, and took up duties towards its divine patron. But the possession of this deity was a privilege from which those outside the clan were rigidly excluded. Their worship would at once be offensive to the deity, and an invasion of cherished prerogative. It would be like admitting foreigners to the city franchise.

I recently heard it stated in the Oxford University pulpit, by a learned preacher, that the Christian religion was the first to step outside the city and the clan and to appeal to man as man. This is a striking instance of the partiality and patchiness in our knowledge of antiquity: the statement is utterly incorrect. There was no more distinctive feature of the later cults of Hellenism than the way in which they made their appeal. Their propaganda was directed not to cities and families, but to individuals. They claimed women apart from their husbands, slaves apart from their masters. They taught that each individual had needs which they alone could satisfy; that their priests had power to impart to each the favour of the deity, conferring certain privileges both in the present and the future life. Their trains wandered through the cities, setting up new shrines or using mere temporary habitations, calling upon all to receive the privileges which they had to bestow, and to enter into communion with their saving deity. The fashion of the appeal was not likely to attract the educated or the fastidious. We may judge of it from Apuleius, and from Demosthenes' attack on his rival Aeschines, who



had once been mixed up with a travelling troupe of worshippers of Sabazius. The priests were often eunuchs, the priestesses scarcely to be distinguished from witches. Their constant demand was for money, without which nothing was to be had of the venial officials. Tame serpents were carried by the leaders; barbarous music attracted the populace; all kinds of fanatic excesses marked the course of the cortège. Philosophers held that their teaching had no bearing upon conduct, and statesmen would gladly have done away with them as interfering with the normal civic life.

Like our own Salvation Army, it was a wild outburst of popular belief, a reaction against the tendency to make religion merely formal as it was in the hands of civic officials, or merely intellectual as it was with the philosophers. The grafted branches of the tree of religion had become sterile and atrophied; therefore vigorous though wild shoots were coming up from the hidden roots. The ideas of primitive religion, embodied in uncouth and extravagant forms, were surging up from the lower strata of humanity; and, in spite of statesmen and poets and philosophers, the new cults had a true relation to fact and reality, had a vital connection with some of the primary data of religious psychology.

## II

The first great truth which constituted, as it were, their lifeblood, was the possibility, nay, the actuality, of communion between God and man. Even the most superstitious of the priestesses of Isis or the priests of Cybele did not think that the help they had to bring

came merely from their own powers and personalities. Rather they claimed to be favoured instruments, chosen mediators through whom the Divine favour could be transmitted to men. They claimed monopolies, but those monopolies rested on a spiritual, not a mere human base. They put men in communication with powers which were beyond and outside man. And in that age this was much. In Homer the Greek deities are represented as in continual contact with man, rewarding and punishing, advising and directing, leading and helping. After Homer they seemed to recede ever further and further. In the Apolline oracles man could still ask counsel of Heaven. In the Eleusinian mysteries he could still feel sympathy with the divine influence which makes the corn grow in the spring. But after Alexander the Great the Apolline oracles fell into decay; and the Eleusinian mysteries were attacked by formalism until they fell under the influence of the religious revival. So distant were the gods of Hellas felt to be from the ordinary votary that in the third century the custom sprang up of diverting religious worship to the successful generals who succeeded in carving out for themselves kingdoms in those unquiet days. The degenerate Athenians sang in an ode to Demetrius Poliorcetes, 'To thee we pray, for other gods either are afar off, or do not exist, or care nothing about us; but thee we see before us, not in wood or marble, but in real presence.'

Let anyone pass direct from this bankruptcy of the classical religion of Greece to the last book of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, in which the hero Lucius expresses in language of extreme fervency his devotion

to the goddess Isis, and he will see how different was the spirit of the new belief from that of the old. Isis had herself appeared in splendid form to Lucius in a dream, and told him how, by sharing in her worship, he might recover his human form which had been by sorcery changed into that of an ass. Full of faith in the goddess, in spite of his bestial form, Lucius approaches the pomp of Isis, and humbly drawing near to the priest, who had also had his warning in a dream, he eats some of the roses which the priest bore, and in a moment returns to his natural shape. With fervent gratitude he prostrates himself at the feet of the goddess, and vows a perpetual adoration. I cannot here repeat the passage, interesting as it is. Isis appears as one who, in the language of the Athenians, is neither far off nor indifferent, but as a present help in trouble; one remaining always in communion with her votaries, and holding the keys of happiness in the present life, and of a blissful immortality beyond the grave.

What, then, were the boons which the less educated classes of the great cities of Asia sought of Isis and Sabazius and Mithras? If we wish to put it in one word, the best that we can choose is *soteria*, safety or salvation. This salvation was regarded as at bottom a liberation of the spirit from the bondage of the flesh by various ways of mortification or inspiration. Among other kinds of release they sought in the present life health and immunity from disease. We may think of the long search of Aelius Aristides, who went from shrine to shrine seeking relief from maladies, some of which were probably imaginary. In all ages faith-

healing goes on ; and when the schools of medicine are strongly materialist in tendency, by natural reaction faith-healing comes more into vogue. In the history of the cult of Aesculapius in Greece, we have a valuable record of the progress of faith-healing in later Greece. It was not until the Hellenistic age that Aesculapius became an important person in the Greek Pantheon. After that his boons are more and more in request ; some of the places connected with his worship, such as Epidaurus and Pergamon, became regular goals of pilgrimage from other parts of Greece. The treatment in such shrines, based upon dreams and prayers, was in part a sensible regimen, but also largely of a faith - healing kind. And by degrees we see the Divine Physician exalted, until he is sometimes spoken of as on a level with Zeus and the Sun-God, as ruler of the world which is unseen as well as of that which appears. In inscriptions and dedications Aesculapius is constantly spoken of as Soter, the Saviour ; and what he was to the more conservative, that Isis and her rivals were to the crowd. The priests sold spells and incantations which gave back health to the diseased, and secured for votaries success in all the transactions of daily life.

But the main stress of the new cults bore not upon the present life, but on that beyond the grave. Man had come to think a great deal more about his chances and his destinies in a future life. Everyone acquainted with the great Attic literature, or familiar with the beautiful Athenian tombs of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., knows how small a part in the thought of the city which intellectually dominated Hellas was

taken by any fears or hopes as to the life beyond the grave. So long as life in Greece was thoroughly enjoyable, surrounded by beautiful monuments of art, full of splendid festivals, made interesting by a lively participation in politics which was making history, so long the future world did not loom large before the pleasure-loving people. In the darker days of dependence and depression which followed, men turned, as under such circumstances men always do turn, from the visible to the unseen world, and sought compensation for the hardness and want of interest which invaded their lives in hopes which went beyond the tomb.

Socrates, in Plato's *Republic*, speaks of the Orphic prophets as guaranteeing to their followers a happy arrival in the world of shades. To Plato this promise is, of course, a mere imposture. But such guarantees were in a later age eagerly sought, and not merely by the poor and ignorant. The loneliness of the last journey, its obsession by crowds of evil demons, its doubtful termination, made men anxious to put themselves in the hands of some saving deity, or some priest who would guarantee his help in the hour of need and secure a welcome from him in the world of shades.

The means to this end were much the same in all the religions of salvation. First there was an initiation; the convert had to prove the reality of his adhesion by going through some test or probation. We are especially well informed in regard to the initiation undergone by the worshippers of Mithras.<sup>1</sup> They had to pass through seven grades successively

<sup>1</sup> Roscher's *Lexikon*, art. "Mithras," by F. Cumont.

before they could attain to the highest rank. At the entrance to each grade they had to submit to tests of various kinds, as to which we have the not altogether satisfactory testimony of some early Christian writers, such as Tertullian, who hated Mithraicism too bitterly to be good witnesses in regard to it. For example, Tertullian tells us that when a votary of Mithras aspired to the rank of a *miles* or soldier, a wreath was offered him with a sword between; he had to throw it from his head, and in future to regard Mithras as his only crown. Tertullian also gives us an account of what he calls the sacraments of Mithraicism—of sprinklings with sacred water to remove moral stains, of anointings with oil, and even of the solemn partaking by the *Mystæ* in common of consecrated bread and water or wine, in memory of the banquet which Mithras and the Sun had enjoyed together at the end of their exploits performed for mankind.

Few things in history are more vexing than the slightness of our knowledge of the Mithraic religion, for so long the rival of Christianity, and so like it in some of its external aspects, though probably very different in tone and spirit. We know that the Christian Church borrowed from the religion of Mithras the sacred season of the turning back of the sun in winter, and used it as the birthday of the Founder of Christianity. But as to other mutual borrowings of ceremony or belief of one religion from the other, we know very little.

In several of the later cults of Greece there existed, in one form or another, a sacred feast in which the deity and his votary shared. The importance of the



sacrifice of communion in early religion was first clearly shown by Robertson Smith, since whose time it has become a commonplace with anthropologists. By consuming together some chosen victim, under the shadow of the spiritual presence of a hero or deity, men were bound together into a religious society and partook of a common life which flowed from the invisible head through the members; and communion thus begun did not cease at death, but was continued in the future life. This communion was the pledge of that safety or salvation of which I have spoken as the keynote of this group of religions.

Other religious ideas of the same range found expression in the new cults, and other religious needs were met by them. The desire of purity, whether merely ceremonial, or a deeper purity of the heart, was fully recognized by them, and no one was admitted to the inner circles who had not sought purity in some way recognized by the society. And as a result of ceremonies of purification and sacraments of communion the votaries expected not merely to secure the favour and help of a guardian power, but also to learn secrets of the divine nature, which raised those who knew them to a higher level than the crowd. Purification, divine communion, a knowledge of sacred things, all these were imparted to the members of the mystic coteries.

In Roman inscriptions one sometimes reads how such and such a man was 'reborn to eternal life.' Naturally a modern student might fancy that such inscriptions were the work of Christians. Not at all. They refer to the strange ceremony belonging to Phrygian

religion whereby a votary was sprinkled, or rather steeped, in the blood of a slain bull, and from that terrible bath arose to a new life. It is the extreme realization of the idea of cleansing by blood, of a piacular sacrifice, the transference by a recognized ritual of life from one being to another, the taking away of sin by a vicarious sacrifice. It is not to be supposed that in these repulsive ceremonies of Phrygia there was any deep-seated ethical element. It is a long and a slow process in history whereby the ethical is developed out of, or attached to, those ceremonies which spring out of the unconscious tendencies of the human spirit. But there must have been many devout seekers after God who never came nearer to Him than in the bath of blood.

### III

No one who in a historic spirit compared Christianity with its early rivals could fail to see the enormous differences between them, as well as certain points of resemblance. In fact, our difficulty lies not in any danger of mixing up Christianity with the crowd of mystic religions, but rather in understanding how such religions as those of Isis and Mithras could be for a moment rivals to Christianity. They had no historic founder, they had no fine sacred literature, their moral level was by no means high. One is disposed to think that they must have had merits greater than the writers of the time allow us to see, or perhaps their attractive power may in part have consisted in this, that they did not involve, as did the

acceptance of Christianity, a decided breach with the past. We may well suppose that if Christianity had fallen instead of triumphing in the struggle, it would have been depicted to us in colours as little alluring as those in which the figures of Isis and Mithras appear amid the mists of history.

But things beautiful and things foul may belong to one class, and have points of likeness one to the other. While there was little direct borrowing on the part of Christianity from rival religions, Christianity had to satisfy the same religious feelings and needs which they had endeavoured to meet. And in meeting these needs she found it necessary to depart in some measure from the character which she had received from her Founder, and to take another complexion. She could only defeat her rivals by satisfying what was good and legitimate in the religious needs of the people. That she was able thus to change and grow, proved that she was alive, and could adapt herself to her surroundings.

A simple use of the concordance will show that in the Synoptic Gospels such words as salvation and saviour scarcely occur except in quotations from the Old Testament. In the Jewish Scriptures, indeed, they are by no means infrequent; and in these Scriptures we may trace the steps whereby the terms passed from a merely temporal meaning, from implying deliverance from enemies or death, to a spiritual signification. But the notion of salvation in the present and in the future life by mystic communion with the Divine, belongs less to the religion of Israel than to that of other and more contemplative races. And the notion grows stronger in Christianity as it turns from

the Jews to the nations of Asia Minor, Syria, and Europe.

Among the Jews a stern and rigorous dualism between God and man is the prevalent view. Man may obey God, may rejoice in God, may subordinate his will to the Divine law, and may, by so doing, be saved from sin and misery. The Jew would rise to the full appreciation of the phrase, 'Our wills are ours to *subordinate* them to thine.' But he would scarcely appreciate the expression, 'Our wills are ours to *make* them thine.' The possible blending of the divine and the human will, the development of the divine within us, does not appear to belong to the sphere of Jewish inspiration, at least in the age before the Jewish religion was largely modified by that of surrounding nations. But these ideas are embodied, in however degraded and materialist a form, in the Pagan mystic cults.

When, directly after the departure of the Master, the first disciples accepted His continued life as a constant bond of union between man and God, as a way of approach to the Eternal, it is clear that the centre of gravity was shifted from the rigorous monotheism of Israel towards the ideas of mysticism. And although, as I have already observed, the constant hostility between Christianity and Paganism makes it very unlikely that the Christian leaders would consciously borrow anything from cultus and rites which they regarded as diabolically inspired, yet they developed, for better and for worse, religious ideas and customs which have a kinship with those of the heathen mystics, a likeness of kind if not of origin.

The Pauline phrases are so familiar to us that our minds rest in them, and we do not care to compare them with the phrases of other religions. And sayings in the Fourth Gospel which belong to the same mystical phase of belief are, by the Evangelist, in accordance with the literary custom of the age, put in the mouth of Jesus Himself. The great mass of Christians, not unnaturally, take this attribution as historic fact, and thus read mysticism even into the parables of the Synoptists. In a sense there may be mysticism in the Synoptic discourses; but it is mysticism of a different kind from that which is to be found in the words of St Paul and the Fourth Evangelist. It was not possible that the life which arose out of a relation to an unseen spiritual Lord could arise so long as Jesus moved among His disciples. The Evangelist himself seems to feel this, for he writes: 'Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.' The coming again is not the visible second coming of which the Synoptics speak so fully, but the coming in the spirit to dwell with men. Once more the Evangelist writes: 'I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you'; 'Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also.'

Many of the sublime sayings which, in accord with the literary practice of the time, the Evangelist puts into the mouth of his Master, and which are the charter of Christianity, can only be fully appreciated if they are regarded as spoken of One present in the

spirit and not in the flesh. The phrase, 'I am the light of the world,' is surely far more applicable to the Saviour of the early Church than to the preacher who confined his mission to Jerusalem and Galilee. The saying, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever,' could only be understood, in an age when the rites of mysticism were familiar to all, as an allusion to a common meal in which the saving deity is spiritually present. And so of other phrases.

And we may fairly ask, in the name of reason and good sense, how the mystic relation between the Head and the members, between the Vine and the branches could possibly be established while the Head visibly walked the earth, shared the wanderings, the hardships, the eating and drinking of His followers, and discoursed daily to them on the things of the visible world. Such relation is only possible to those who do not see, but believe. It could not be combined with earthly companionship; but it took its place when earthly companionship had come to an end.

Many parts of the Pauline teaching which deal with baptism into Christ's death, and burial with Him to rise to a new life, with salvation by the blood of Christ; the statements of St Paul that his life is in Christ, that he is dead to the world but alive through faith;—these all belong to the theology of mysticism. So does the saying in the Johannine Epistle that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, and the phrase of the writer to the Hebrews, that Jesus Christ 'became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.' Indeed, in almost all parts of the



New Testament, except the Synoptic Gospels, the *Epistle of James*, and the *Revelation*, we find a mystic substratum which sometimes comes to the surface.

We may especially trace the influence of the mystic cults of later Greece, and of the frame of mind which they produced, in a remarkable shifting of the centre of gravity of Christianity, from the present life to that beyond the grave. In the Synoptic Gospels there is much about the second coming of the Son of Man to judge the nations, but there is very little as to the world beyond the grave: a few general phrases only, such as 'life eternal' and 'everlasting fire.' The whole stress is laid on the coming of the Kingdom on earth, and the relation of human souls to the divine. It was but natural that, as the hope of the second coming died away into the far future, and the reign of saints on the earth became more and more dreamlike, the thoughts of Christians became more concentrated on the heavenly world where the Master dwelt and the mansions which He had prepared there for His followers.

We must distinguish from Jewish apocalyptic hopes, both the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul, which was due to the philosophy of Greece, and the lore of the place of judgment in the future world, the realms of bliss and of torture, which had indeed found a place in most religions, but which essentially and originally belonged to the mystic cults of Asia and Egypt, of which in this lecture I am speaking. Plato speaks of the Orphic lore of the future world, and the pretensions of its votaries to secure a happy reception there for their friends. And in Egypt, as far back as history will carry us, the fate of souls in

the world beyond death was one of the chief objects of thought and preparation among the living.

By the discovery in recent years of the book called the *Apocalypse of Peter*, it has been made clear by what way the visions of heaven and hell which so vividly stirred the imaginations of the Christians of the third and fourth generations passed into the Church. Directly, it would seem that they were taken over from Orphism; at least, the likeness between the descriptions of the future world contained in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and those of Orphic books is so close that it is scarcely possible to doubt that there was a close connection between them. We need not trace back further the sources of the lore of the future world in the beliefs of the peoples of Asia; nor need we follow its history in the Christian Church to its culmination in the poem of Dante. It is sufficient to insist on the main point that this lore was one of the spoils taken by Christianity from the mystic religions of Hellenism.

It was indeed eminently suited for conversion to Christian purposes. If the Jewish apocalyptic ideas could be baptized, as they are in the Johannine *Apocalypse*, much more readily could baptism be administered to ideas so other-worldly, so independent of race and creed, as the beliefs in reward and punishment in a future life. By the Egyptians they had been connected with ordinary civic morality; by the Orphists they were brought into close relations with a saving deity. The morality could be translated to a higher level, and the saving deity could give way to the Saviour new born into the world.

Time would fail me if I tried to set forth all the other beliefs which found their way into Christianity by degrees from the same fountain of mystic religion. Such notions as that the priests as a class formed a means of approach by man to his deity, that as intercessors or mediators they could ensure the bestowal on votaries of the Divine favour, the notion that the body was the source of all evil, and had to be tamed by self-mortification, the value of propitiatory sacrifice, the importance of ceremonial ablutions, and many other such beliefs, belong more or less to all primitive religions; but they were adapted to Christianity by a previous passage through the more developed religions of Asia. The debt of Christianity in this direction is being more fully recognized year by year; and in such a debt there is nothing of which any Christian need be ashamed. Of course, if we start with the crude notion that Christianity is the only good religion and all others vile and misleading, we shall be shocked to hear of the passing into Christianity of Pagan beliefs. But few who so think will have gone with me thus far. From the first I have tried to represent Christianity, not as a system revealed entire, but as a principle of life and growth, and nowhere is the absorbing power of life more clearly shown than in the relations of Christianity to its early rivals of the Hellenistic age.

#### IV

When we study the Christianity of the first age, as it is brought before us in the history of the *Acts* and in the Apostolic Epistles, we find already established

in the Church certain rites, which had an important and a clearly defined meaning to believers. These rites were, in particular, three: baptism, the laying on of hands, and the Lord's Supper. The origin of all of these is obscure, but the meaning which attached to them is not doubtful. Baptism was specially connected with the washing away of sins and the beginning of a new and higher life. By the laying on of hands the spirit of Christ was imparted by the Apostles to their converts. In the Lord's Supper all had communion with their risen and glorified Lord, and became partakers of the heavenly life.

Baptism was probably taken over into the Church from the followers of John the Baptist. We have no satisfactory proof that in the lifetime of the Master those who intended to follow Him were admitted by the rite of baptism. The only passage in the Gospels which seems to imply this is John iv. 2, where it is stated that the disciples of Jesus baptized largely, but not Himself, and this passage cannot be taken as a good historic authority. The command to baptize all nations, with which Matthew and Mark end, is also open to doubt, for it probably reflects the inspired mind of the early Church and is not strictly a narrative of events. But however the custom first came in, it played a part of extraordinary importance in the Church, of which it became, as it were, the portal. Those who had been baptized into the name of Jesus Christ became a visible community with mutual ties, the germ of the future Church.

It is not represented in our documents that the laying on of hands was ever enjoined by the Founder.

It seems to have been a way sanctioned in Oriental, and especially Jewish custom, for blessing a younger or less dignified person. The history of Mesmerism in recent times shows with sufficient clearness that the hand is an admirable instrument for conveying emotion or volition.

The Lord's Supper is mentioned alike by the Synoptists and St Paul. I need not here repeat the examination which I have made in another work<sup>1</sup> of the very remarkable historic difficulties which cleave to the view that Jesus just before His departure instituted the rite in perpetuity. It must be confessed that any other theory as to the way in which it was adopted by the Church lies, perhaps, under equal difficulties.

But that which I have at present to insist upon is not a matter of origin, but of use and meaning. Whether baptism and the Lord's Supper were adapted from Jewish usage by the express command of the Founder, or were by the early Church taken from some other source, is doubtful. In any case, they gained a meaning which they could not have easily acquired apart from the prevalence of certain religious ideas and beliefs in the minds of the first Gentile converts. Unless the ideas of initiatory ceremonies as the portal of a religious society, and of the sacrifice of communion as a means of union with a saving deity had already been widely spread, especially in Asia Minor and Syria, the countries of the earliest Christian propaganda, the history of those institutions would have been very different from what it was. It was in the Gentile Churches founded by St Paul that we find the full

<sup>1</sup> *Exploratio Evangelica*, ch. xxxvi.

meaning attached to them; and it was reserved for St Paul himself to state for the first time their mystic value and import. As St Paul was the champion of the admission of Gentiles to perfect equality in the new community, so he baptized into Christ some of the most valuable and deep-seated of religious ideas, attaching them to ceremonies which, whencesoever derived, were taking a firm root in the Church. The Gospel of St Paul was essentially a gospel of that *soteria* or salvation which was being recognized as the great religious need of men. But in the place of Zeus the Saviour, of Æsculapius, or Mithras, he set Christ risen and exalted. Thus he wrested from the heathen one of the most effective of their weapons, and raised the idea of salvation by so much as the Christ of the Church was higher than the deities of the pagan sects. And the value of ideas, as of man himself, must be judged, not by their origin, but by that to which they have power to attain.

It is always difficult, sometimes impossible, to trace any actual line of connection between the existence of religious ideas in the various heathen cults and their growth in the Christian community. That any borrowing, direct or conscious, took place is very unlikely. The hostility between Christianity and the rival beliefs was so keen and bitter that it would not stoop to borrow from them. The paths of ideas are in all ages too deep and indirect to be searched out. In some cases a hint derived from a Pagan cult might work unconsciously. The great point is that the soil was prepared, and a seed falling from any quarter would rapidly take root and flourish. A



custom unconsciously followed, a dream or vision which appeared to a Christian teacher, a mystical interpretation of a text of Scripture: any of these causes might be the origin of a movement. I would even venture further, and say that the realm of spirit is one, and influences which move in it often pass without word or communication, save that between spirit and spirit. The vast sea of the unconscious, which lies beneath human consciousness, is agitated by storms of which the results appear unexpectedly on the surface, so that often effects appear to have no cause, and movements pass like an epidemic from soul to soul.

Let us always keep apart the question of origins in the Church from that of inspiration. What the Christian life is and has been in the world, we know or can know; the source of the materials which she chose to adopt, to build into her scheme, is another matter. Their source may often have been humble, sometimes heathen, but that does not prevent them from having had a useful part in the life of Christianity.

It seems to me that one cannot understand history unless one traces in it an unconscious adaptation to ends not yet revealed. Even in biology, according to many eminent biologists, we may see the powers of life working in men and animals to ends of which they are quite unconscious. The wing of a bird was developed through long ages, during which it was useless to the creature which possessed it until it came to its actual purpose. The hand of the savage is too fine an instrument for his rough uses, and his brain quite

unnecessarily large; but both hand and brain find their function as man grows toward civilization. Something of the kind runs through history. And thus in the growth and spread of popular superstitions, if we may call them by so harsh a name, we may well discern a gradual preparation for Christianity. Mithras and Sabazius, no less than Judaism, served as pedagogues to lead men to Christ. These religions stand towards Christianity, to continue my biological comparison, as the wing of a penguin stands towards that of an eagle. And it is surely no slight on Christianity to say that it met the blind longings of the Pagan nations, and showed them a path towards which they had been for long generations trying to feel their way. The religious needs which were very imperfectly met by the initiations and ceremonies and prayers of the cults of the Pagan saving deities, found a complete and permanent satisfaction from faith in an exalted Christ.

## V

I have spoken of the christening of what was outside early Christianity as taking place in history in a double form: first, by a statement of it in really human terms; and second, by its domination by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In the case of the mystic tendencies of Hellenism, both of these changes were needed. Their humanization was necessary because, in spite of their essential subjectivity, there yet clung to them much of sheer materialism. Many of these cults were, as I have observed, full of degrading superstition. The salvation they brought was held

to depend upon the performance of outward rite, not on the change of will and heart which sometimes but not always accompanied that rite. And this materialism, though at first kept aloof by the spirit of Christianity in the glow of its early fervour, made its way in by slow degrees. For example, in the earliest description which we have of the Lord's Supper, in the letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, the rite appears with as little of ritual as one can conceive. The spirit in it is everything. We know how by degrees it took on more and more of supernatural mechanical efficacy, until we reach a mass of tales of miracles wrought by the mere elements of the sacred communion. And the rite of baptism, which at first was only administered to those who repented of sin and professed the faith of Christ, was before long administered to children too young to know what faith meant. I am not asserting that infant baptism is in our day indefensible; the present value of a rite is always a different matter from its original purpose; but, in its introduction, infant baptism may have been a reversion towards materialism, and an abandonment of the spirit of Christ.

But it was the second of the two Christian processes for which there was most urgent need. For the idea of deity which prevailed among the votaries of Sabazius and Cybele was not only at a far lower level than that of Greek philosophy, but it was at a lower level than that of Greek poetry and art. The mystic cults belonged to those who were without refined culture or high ethical ideas; and it would be simply ludicrous to place their conceptions of the divine on a level

with those even of the least instructed of the Christians. He that was least in the new Kingdom of Heaven had much to teach in this matter to the mystagogue and his coterie.

It is, then, not merely the Christian spirit, but the spirit traceable in the life of the Jesus of history, which transformed the spirit of the mysteries by a divine baptism. And, in spite of all their falling back, there has probably never been within the limits of the Christian Church any relapse into such foul superstitions as those which roused the contempt of Plato and the indignation of Clement.

As the adoption of the best of Judaism made Christianity ethical, and as the inclusion of Hellenic philosophy adapted it to the intellectuals, so the infiltration of ideas from the mysteries adapted it to the peasantry. The classes of the community who are not intellectual or self-conscious usually have in their unconscious tendencies a closer connection with the past history of the race. They have religious needs and dispositions of which they are unaware, but which lie close to the centre of their being. The dwellers in the country, the pagani, as the Romans called them, came over to Christianity but slowly; and when they came, they expected in the new religion the satisfaction of needs which had been met by very ancient cults.

## LECTURE VI

### THE BAPTISM OF ROME

#### I

FAR more serious obstacles to the progress of Christianity than were raised by the great cults of Greece were offered by a kind of religion which lay at a lower level, but was more closely connected with daily life and the constitution of society. The further back we go in human history the closer becomes the connection between the organization of society and religion, religion of such a kind as is recognized at that stage of civilization. The full meaning of this connection is very hard for us to realize ; partly because the ideas of primitive religion seem to us strange and barbarous, partly because we are accustomed to consider the family relations as secular and standing in small need of religious sanction, as full of duty and emotion, but not closely related to any actual form of worship. Even marriage, which is still in the more conservative branches of the Church spoken of as a sacrament, is not recognized as such by the great mass of any people. Legislators would not now act upon such a supposition.

But at the time of the birth of Christianity no side of religion had stronger practical force than that which had to do with the life of the family. Among the Romans it was almost the only part of religion which had not been flooded and obscured in the rush of incoming Greek and Oriental cults. In Roman houses there was a little shrine where incense was offered to Vesta and the Lares; and on the occasion of a marriage or a birth, the spiritual powers which protected the family had to be called in to give their sanction, and to admit the fresh-coming wife or child within the sacred circle of the home. It was much the same in Greece also. At every banquet a libation of wine was poured to the deities of the household; and the spirits of deceased ancestors were regarded as closely concerned with all the doings of their descendants, and as requiring at stated seasons gifts of food from those who survived.

And as the members of the family were united by a common relation to the dead, so were families united into clans by the veneration for a common ancestor of the clan, real or fancied. Ancestral heroes guarded each village and each field: an exchange of services went on. The living brought to the shrine of the hero offerings and veneration, and the hero in return guarded the land and prevented it from passing into the hands of strangers.

All this is strange to modern Europe; but we have only to turn to accounts of the life of India, China, or Japan to find ideas parallel to the family worship of the ancient world in full activity.

In particular, the valuable works of Mr Lafcadio



Hearn<sup>1</sup> have exhibited to us the religion of the family and the clan as a living force of inestimable power, governing even in the smallest matters the daily life of the people of Japan. 'It should be recognized,' he writes,<sup>2</sup> 'that no religion is more sincere, no faith more touching than this domestic worship, which regards the dead as continuing to form a part of the household life, and needing still the affection and the respect of their children and kindred. Originating in those dim ages when fear was stronger than love, the cult at last developed into a religion of affection; and this it yet remains. The belief that the dead need affection, that to neglect them is a cruelty, that their happiness depends upon duty, is a belief that has almost cast out the primitive fear of their displeasure. They are not thought of as dead: they are believed to remain among those who loved them. Unseen they guard the home, and watch over the welfare of its inmates.'

The belief in the *manes* of ancestors is more naïve and simple in Japan than it was in the great cities of the Hellenistic world, but enough remained in the latter to make it an important factor in life. It was constantly kept in repair by the custom of feasts to the dead, and the daily worship of the hearth. No doubt this primitive worship was falling into decay in Italy and Greece in the time of early Christianity. Yet length of time had given it profound roots in the heart of the people. It had survived the rise of national deities and been mingled with their cults;

<sup>1</sup> Especially, *Japan: an interpretation*, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *Japan*, p. 52.

just as in Japan it has been apparently not destroyed, but even strengthened and beautified by the invasion of Buddhism, and now remains on friendly and peaceable terms with that noble religion.

How did Christianity deal with the religion of the family and the clan? Did the new faith act towards it with unrelenting hostility? or was something found in it which could be preserved and consecrated? Such questions are not easy to answer, since they are concerned with phenomena which the ambitious muse of history passes by with contempt; and we have to recover the facts from chance allusions as best we can.

The modern history of Japan suggests that if the religious base of family life had been as well preserved and as potent in Greece and Rome as it still is in Japan, there must have been a war to the death between it and Christianity. The great Japanese ruler, Iyéyasu,<sup>1</sup> of the seventeenth century, who was determined to preserve the religious basis of Japanese society, was tolerant to all religions except Christianity, the professors of which he rigorously exterminated. At the present day most Japanese find in the claims of the Founder of Christianity to be preferred to father and mother, an insuperable barrier to the acceptance of Christianity. In the same way many of the saints and martyrs of early Christianity had to choose between the following of Christ and the adherence to parents or family; whence many noted tragedies of the Church. But since the religion of the family and the home was in Greece and Asia in a decadent condition, it was not impossible for Christianity to make

<sup>1</sup> L. Hearn, *Japan*, p. 349.

terms with it, to take some part of it over and leave the rest to decay.

Though the spiritual passion of Christianity might easily find itself in conflict with organized family life, yet some sides of that life at all events were from the very first baptized into Christianity. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God seems to carry as a necessary corollary the principle that earthly fathers should look upon their position and duties in a more spiritual light, and treat their sons as God treats His human children, only, of course, with the difference of infinitely less knowledge and authority. And as Jesus had consecrated the filial relation by comparing human fatherhood to that of God, so St Paul baptized the relation of husband to wife by comparing it to the relation between Christ and the Church.

We do not, however, in this way reach the relation between the individual and the family or the clan, which was in essence narrow and local, and could not easily be brought into touch with Christianity. Here the process of baptism took place at a later time, and in a less complete degree. It was possible, however, to baptize, at all events into the *name* of Christ, the patron heroes of families, the tutelary spirits of trades and corporations, and the like. The Christian saint could easily and completely take the place of the Pagan hero. Of such substitution we have abundant instances: St Crispin became the patron saint of tailors, St Hubert of huntsmen, and so on. And though the saints could not well be regarded as ancestors of clans, even in fancy, since so many of them were celibates, yet locally saints or special

forms of the Madonna could establish a recognized patronage, and become responsible for preserving lands or cities from the hand of the enemy, from famine, drought, and pestilence. In this case, at all events, Christianity—not, of course, the Christianity of Jesus, but that of the Roman Empire—could easily meet Paganism on its own ground, and adopt its ways.

The case was somewhat different in regard to the worship of the dead; for here the phenomena were not merely of cult, but of family feeling and affection. To those who had been accustomed to feel their dead near them, and to have frequent intercourse with them by recognized channels, it was an insufficient consolation if they were told to venerate the burial-place of some saint or martyr for whom they had no special affection. But the Catholic Church turned the position by a stroke of great skill. If prayers must not any longer be offered *to* deceased members of a family, at all events prayers could be made *for* them: prayers by which they might be released from the pains of Purgatory, and admitted through the gates of Paradise. The prayers for the dead acted well as a practical substitute for the old family cultus, and served to keep up the feeling that those who pass away are not wholly lost to us, but still have the claim of affection on our hearts, and may still be benefited by self-denial and self-sacrifice on the part of survivors.

It may be thought that we have now come down rather far both from the historic and the spiritual point of view in church history, and are speaking of some of the corruptions which Christianity suffered from con-

tact with Paganism rather than of any valuable elements which she rescued from the wreck of ancient life. No doubt the cultus of saints and martyrs was one of the baser forms of the Christianity of the Roman Empire, and nothing tended more to materialize the religion of the spirit, and to rivet the chains of Roman despotism than the doctrine of Purgatory. In fact, in speaking of the relations of Christianity with the religious basis of ancient society, before I speak of its dealings with the ordinary civic society of Greek and Roman towns, I am to some extent transposing the order of events. Christianity grew up and flourished in the towns long before it spread into more primitive country regions; and so it had to deal with more advanced social institutions before it came into contact with such as were less advanced. I had the option of following either the natural order of development of ancient society, or the order of development of Christianity: and it matters very little which of the two orders be accepted.

At the same time, in spite of all the evils and abuses which arose in the Middle Ages from the development of saint-worship and the doctrine of Purgatory, we must not regard either of these as essentially bad, nor as destitute of elements of permanent value. The worship of saints was but a primitive and stereotyped form of that cultus of the good and great men and women of the past which has been in England too much neglected, but which is essential to any really religious view of life. We should wish not so much to set aside the saints of the Church as to extend the list so as to include all those who

have lived well or nobly died on behalf of the race. When Auguste Comte drew up his Positivist Calendar he had a great and true idea ; but he also was defective through want of breadth of culture and interest, and he was unsuccessful in trying to include in a final list the names of all who represent the highest summits of human life.

And the idea of a communion of saints, of the unity of life in families and nations through the ages, is really an essential part of any working religion. When the Reformers rejected the doctrine of Purgatory—which had been so mixed up with venality and imposture that they could not help rejecting it—and introduced the appalling doctrine that every soul was at death destined for heaven or hell, they strained human nature to the breaking point. Such terribly stern doctrine may at the time have been necessary to give resisting power to the Reformation ; but it may be doubted whether it has ever been really accepted by the mass of Christians in any country. And in our own day it is in a state of complete decay, though it has not been easy in England and America to find a working substitute for it. But the rapid growth and wide success in America of the religious bodies which profess a belief in the ultimate salvation of all men, proves that what the Church endeavoured to embody was an essential part of religious belief.

## II

In another direction the influence of Roman religion told heavily upon the Christian Church. We must



always remember that the tales of the gods, which are prominent in Virgil and Ovid, are mere borrowings from the unexhausted and perennial fountain of Greek myth. As Virgil imitates the wanderings of Odysseus and the deeds of prowess of Achilles in his great poem, so he borrows the Homeric deities with their loves and quarrels, their patronage and caprices. And he borrows without belief. Nowhere is the thesis that poetry is the ghost of dead religion truer than in reference to the Latin poets: they accept mythology merely as decorative ornament of a tale or an ode, and do not expect their readers to take it very seriously.

But it is not only the Roman poets who were attracted by the siren voice of Greek poetical mythology. From the time when Greece first came within the ken of the husbandmen of the Roman plain, those of them who had any sense of beauty came under her sway. The Greek deities displaced the vaguer and more primitive gods of Rome, not only in state ceremonial but in all public and private life. Temples arose to Apollo, Diana, and other gods, and even when the name in use was a Latin name, Diana or Juno, the deities really worshipped were the Artemis and Hera of the Greeks. Festivals were transferred from the local deities to the incoming Pantheon; and the Sibylline books, of Greek origin, were regarded as the great authorities in matters of cult and faith.

The reason of this was the want of imagination, and the intellectual barrenness, of the old Roman religion. It so little exercised the intelligence, the

imagination, the emotions of the people, that it was easily thrust into the background by the splendid mythology of Greece. And yet we know that the practices, the actual ritual, attaching to the Roman religion went on steadily, even to the later days of the Empire. The safety of the State was supposed to be involved in the exact performance on stated occasions of certain rites handed down from antiquity. These rites were performed by the civil magistrates, and were a regular part of their duties. The dress which these officials were to wear, the motions of their hands, the formulæ—often scarcely intelligible—which they were to repeat, were all prescribed in the most rigid manner. No inaccuracy was tolerated. But it was a matter of indifference whether the officiating magistrate believed in the deities to whom he was sacrificing. The post of Pontifex Maximus, the headship of Roman religion, was held by such men as Sulla and Cæsar, who were complete sceptics. It is a strange state of things, which we find it not easy to realise, when the mind, the heart, the faith were eliminated from religion, but postures and dress and formulæ were retained with unquestioning conservatism.

It is obvious what an astounding contrast this kind of religion presented to primitive Christianity. And so long as Christianity was an enthusiasm, it would seem impossible that Roman ritual could have any influence upon it. Christianity was in its very essence the negation of mere formality, the assertion of the religion of the spirit. Yet there came a time—when the Christian religion was established, and its headquarters fixed at Rome—when the old Roman official

nobility, the descendants of consuls and pontiffs, began to have influence in the Church; and they actually succeeded in bringing into it something of their ancestral conservatism of ritual apart from belief. The customs of service and sacrament which had grown up to meet the needs of the Church could be treated as the Roman state-ritual had been treated, and regarded as more important than the beliefs in which they had taken their rise.

Clearly it was not possible to baptize ritual into Christ in any true sense of the phrase. Christian baptism could not be given to a lifeless corpse, nor could it be given to dead works and unmeaning formulæ. But for all that, the attachment of value to ritual, to traditional words and motions and clothes, could and did make its way into Christianity. There is no conservatism like religious conservatism for potency. And the customs of ritual, which had been a part of public life and of the mental furniture of the Roman people, for untold generations, could not evaporate without leaving a residuum.

It may be thought that the Roman religion was too local and too peculiar a cult to greatly affect rising Christianity. But we must, in the first place, remember how great has been in all ages the influence exercised on Christianity by Rome, the head of government, the centre of the civilized world. And in the second place we must observe that the tendency to the establishment of a sacrosanct ritual, though most strongly marked at Rome, was a feature in almost all early cults; and, in fact, it has roots which go back far into the dim prehistoric life of the race. Ritual is an important part

of all primitive religion. It was the extreme natural conservatism of the Romans which preserved among them to a late time the respect for outward observance which is so prominent among savage tribes.

In any case there can be no doubt that we are speaking of a process which really took place. As materialism crept into the sacraments through the influence of Asia, so materialism crept into ritual through Roman influence. How deeply it became rooted there we know very well. Anyone who even now attends High Mass at some continental cathedral can see how small is the part played in the service by intelligence or belief, and how great the part played by vestments, by ritual, by processions. This was even more the case in the earlier, though of course not the earliest, ages of the Church. It is the result of what may be termed a process of ossification, as to which I shall say more in the next lecture. Then, as now, there might be found among the worshippers some finer souls to whom the ceremony was but an elaborate symbolism to raise the imagination to a higher plane; but then, as now, the masses did not look far beyond the visible, nor hear more than met the ear.

### III

I have next to speak of what is not precisely religious, but yet is developed out of religion, and dependent upon it for life and warmth, the ordinary civic life of the people who dwelt in the cities of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, at the time of the rise of the Christian faith. We must remember that Christianity started as an enthusiasm, a

passion, without definite relations to the civil world and to practical life. And the notion, so widely spread among the early disciples, that the second coming of their Lord was at hand, and that they were bound to stand ready for His advent, tended strongly to divorce them from the ordinary everyday life of the world. In the teaching of the Master, so far as it is preserved to us, we have little which bears upon the daily life of the family, the township, the nation. But if Christianity was to go on as a living religion in the world, it must needs take up some attitude in regard to the simple and unostentatious duties of the life of the master of the family, the landowner, the merchant, the State official. It is quite natural that so long as the first passion of Christianity lasted, we should hear but little of the ordinary civic background against which the great drama of the salvation of the world was being played. We are apt to suppose that the early Christians were all unworldly enthusiasts, ready to spend and to be spent for Christ. But this could not have been the case. Even in the Gospels we read of a young man who had great possessions and was unwilling to give them up for the mission life. And, from the *Acts*, it is clear that those who cast in their lot with Christianity often went on with their civic duties and continued the family life; such were the Centurion Cornelius, Philemon the friend of Paul, and many others. I speak of private and family life, not of that which was public and official. For there was beyond doubt some foundation for the general opinion that the Christians were deficient in their discharge of duties to the State. This was the



defect of their qualities, and a cause of much of the persecution which they endured. One cannot justify them, except by saying that human nature is a one-sided thing, and that when men's minds are strongly bent on the introduction of reforms in one direction, defects in another direction escape notice.

In the early age of Christianity, just as among ourselves, and indeed at all periods of history, the life of States could not go on without the presence of a mass of respectable and ordinary citizens, faithful to the daily duties of life, not slothful in business, and bringing up families to take their place and to carry on the business of material civilization. The life of such citizens did not require a complete renovation; but it did require a baptism, that the old duties might be still discharged, but discharged in a new spirit, and with a closer reliance on the divine aid which is ever ready for those who seek it even for the performance of the most trivial duties of life.

We are apt to overlook this phase of early Christianity. And many people may imagine that there is truth in what we hear from the pulpit so often, that the whole heathen world was sunk in vice and corruption and had no sound elements in it. This was far from being the case.

As St Paul poured contempt upon Greek philosophy regarded as a means of attaining to knowledge of God, so, with ancestral prejudice, he exaggerated the immorality of the Græco-Roman world. No doubt, in cities of commerce and pleasure like Corinth and Ephesus, there were—and not only in the lowest classes of the population—multitudes who lived a life of filth,



physical and moral, sunk in all the vices to which a crowded city life too easily leads men. To such might well apply the language used by the Apostle in some of his epistles, 'Filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity.' I need not go on with the citation. Everyone will remember the foul catalogues of vices which come again and again as a foil to the descriptions of the Christian virtues. Just in such a way we should expect a city-missionary or an officer in the Salvation Army, accustomed to pioneer work in the slums of our great cities, to speak of the unconverted of the classes with whom he comes in contact.

The misfortune is that the writings of St Paul have been invested with an infallibility which he would have been the last to claim, or rather the first energetically to repudiate. And his indignant outbursts of disgust at the low level of the morality which he found in the byways of the cities and the workshops of the slaves have been taken for an accurate description of the state of manners in the Græco-Roman world. Our divines have not always had enough of the spirit of historic criticism to judge that discount must be taken from the statements of great religious reformers as to the condition of those whom they would reform. And they have not usually been brought into contact with the class of facts which would have formed a valuable means of correction, namely, a knowledge of the social condition of the Mediterranean world under the early Roman emperors. The writers of the period with whom educated men

have been familiar are Tacitus and Juvenal. Tacitus, of course, conveys to us a profound impression of the vices and follies of the ruling class at Rome at the time of the rise of Christianity. But Tacitus is, above all things, an artist and stylist, who lays on his colours to produce a Rembrandt-like effect of strong light and shade. And Juvenal is even less careful of measure.

No doubt, when Christianity came into the world, there was something to justify both Tacitus and St Paul. In the high aristocracy of Rome, the vices which come of unbridled power were rife—sensuality, effeminacy, cruelty; though there were scattered through the class men like Pætus, Galba, Agricola, whose virtues were as conspicuous as the vices of their colleagues. And there was a debased mob in the great cities. But in every country the uppermost and the lowest strata of society, the froth and the dregs, are the most corrupt. Between the two there was a great population of people, neither over-wealthy nor over-poor, who attained a very respectable rank of decency and honour. It is in fact well known that the period which elapsed between Augustus and Commodus was a period in which the general level of morality stood high: men in general lived quiet, orderly, and reputable lives. This is well known to be the verdict of Gibbon, and it is the verdict of sound historic criticism.<sup>1</sup> There was indeed a time, at the end of the Roman Republic, when the constitution of society had fallen sadly to pieces, a time when the Romans had not yet realized their obligations towards the

<sup>1</sup> Such recent works as Mr Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, or Mr Oakesmith's *Religion of Plutarch*, make this clear.

nations which they had subdued, and those nations, degraded by conquest, had lost the national feeling and self-respect which were the safeguards of their morality. But the great reforms of Augustus bore abundant fruit. He not only succeeded in inspiring the Roman officials with a sense of responsibility, but he was even able to introduce a loyalty to Rome and Cæsar which took in some measure the place of the decaying civic religions. The external face of society must have speedily undergone a marked improvement.

#### IV

And with the power of Roman citizenship went the elevating power of the later Greek philosophy, especially of Stoicism, one of the noblest nurses of manly spirit which the world has ever seen. The notion which Macaulay in his *Essay on Bacon* enforces with all the power of his rhetoric that the Greek philosophers were mere splitters of hairs and architects of words, who did nothing for practical life, is as false as any view could be. In any intellectual movement originating in Greece, there would be sure to be too much of speculation, too much of rhetoric, too great reliance on words, and too little respect for fact. Nevertheless, it would not be easy to exaggerate the permanent good done to the human spirit by the successive schools of Greek philosophy. Nor did their working reach only the few. Of course, none but those who had leisure and a liking for intellectual exercise could attain any rank in philosophy. In every country, the governing tendencies of thought are worked out by the few, followed only at second or

third hand by the many. But the many, not having ideas of their own, are always willing to follow the lead of those whom, either on intellectual or moral grounds, they find worthy of being followed. Thus Greek philosophy, like all other phases of Greek culture, slowly filtered down from stratum to stratum of the population. To many of the aspects of the dying civic religions, philosophy was the only heir; and those aspects were intellectually the highest. The followers of the new ecstatic cults might seek the fulfilment of their wishes in this life, and the safety of their souls in the life to come, in the communion with some saving deity. Great political value attached to the worship of Rome and Augustus. But those who sought a reasonable motive for their actions, who wished to bring their lives into a state of harmony with the world around them, and the divine voice within them, could have recourse only to Greek philosophy, and must seek among those who wore the cloak of the professed Stoic or Academic for some one to help them to subordinate their unruly impulses to the law of a higher life.

A master in these matters, Dr E. Caird, has in a recent work<sup>1</sup> traced the way in which the Greek mind and conscience worked its way in the course of nearly a thousand years to a reasonable theology, a lofty monotheism, which is in all essentials the same as the monotheism held by cultivated men in our own days, though of course the glow, the religious passion of Christianity is absent. On the ethical side Stoicism, on the speculative side Neoplatonism, are the best

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers.*

religious achievements of the Greek spirit. One may often hear it said that Stoicism and Neoplatonism represent the highest that the unaided intellect of man can achieve in feeling after God. The unaided intellect of man! Just as if man, cut off from the daily and hourly inspiration of the divine spirit, were capable of drawing near to God in any way. Without the help of God we can never learn anything at all of His nature, or take a step in the way of the higher divine life. Even Cicero asserts that without divine inspiration no man can become really great. It was the aid of the spirit of God vouchsafed to man which brought Stoicism and Neoplatonism to so high a perfection that it is difficult to say that the followers of those schools stood on a lower religious level than any save the highest of those teachers who professed the Christian name. But Stoicism and Neoplatonism, it will be answered, had no future; they were destined to be destroyed and superseded by the rising religion of Christ. Here again we have but a small fraction of the truth. It is true that the Pagan forms of theology and religion disappeared in the general and vast wreck of ancient civilization, while the germs of a new order were slowly developed. But even at the time, some of the best of the ethical and religious ideas of dying Paganism were taken over by Christianity and baptized into the new faith; and at the time of the Renaissance the thought and the beliefs of the Greek philosophers rose again in some circles, and have since, at times, had their revenge on conquering Christianity. Even in the present day, it may be said of many of our greatest writers, Goethe,



Taine, Matthew Arnold, and many others, that they have on the whole a closer intellectual relationship to Epictetus, Plotinus, Plutarch, than to the great Christian Fathers who were the contemporaries of those illustrious teachers. In this matter, as in so many religious views, we must remember the advice of Dr Johnson, and clear our minds of cant.

What is the meaning of the fact that Seneca, the Roman philosopher, seemed to the Christians so much one of themselves that they believed in a long correspondence between him and St Paul, and Jerome mentions him in the list of Christian writers? In fact, between the writings of Seneca and the Epistles of St Paul there is a remarkable parallelism in many respects. Dr Lightfoot of Durham has drawn out the comparison in a very striking way. Seneca and Paul were contemporaries at Rome, but few now suppose that they ever came into actual contact. Neither can have directly borrowed from the other; but both take from the same source the divine revelation given by God to the thinkers and moralists of the early Roman imperial age, which found its readiest expression in the words of the philosophers of the Stoic schools, but which must needs also make its way into Christianity. In Paul's case there had been special opportunities for studying the ethics of Stoicism, for his youth had been passed at Tarsus, where was an actual Stoic school. And we must remember that the Greek philosophic teachers did not hide themselves in obscure nooks, but disputed daily in the market-place. Their views, as well as their persons, must have been well known to all citizens. The young Saul, as he wandered



through the streets, must often and often have heard eloquent tongues expounding the doctrines of Stoicism, and however Jewish prejudice may have stopped his ears, the words may yet have found a fitting soil in his heart, and borne fruit. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was of Semitic extraction; and it may fairly be said that Stoicism and Christianity comprised some of the same elements, though differently mixed.

Christianity took over from the Stoics, and baptized into Christ, one idea of most far-reaching importance, the idea of a common humanity. The value of a man as such, the relationship of all men one to another, are tenets which lie on the surface of such Stoic writings as those of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. And men are related to one another as being all sons of God. 'He who has learned,' writes Epictetus,<sup>1</sup> 'that the greatest and supreme and the most comprehensive community is that which is composed of men and God, why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the world, why not a son of God, and why should he be afraid of anything which happens among men?' Nor were such sentiments confined to the great philosophers. The Roman audience enthusiastically applauded the verse of the comedian Terence: 'I am a man; I esteem nothing human foreign to me.' At first sight one may even doubt whether such broad and noble humanism needed anything from the Christian spirit. Yet it did need something: the feeling of the close relation of man to his Father in Heaven, and the love of the Father for man. The sentiments of the Stoics needed to be grafted on to the stem of a living

<sup>1</sup> Trans. Long, p. 30. I have omitted part of the passage.

and working Church. The monotheism of the Stoics and the monotheism of the Jews had to be united by the living bond of the Christian union, and each placed on a higher level of faith and hope. From the first, Christianity possessed the potentiality of an universal religion. And in the parable of the good Samaritan, recorded by Luke, we find the enthusiasm of humanity expressed in memorable form. But it took time before the new religion grew to the height of its possibilities, before the profound and religious view of man as man which we can trace in the utterances of the Founder was the recognized basis of the Christian society.

Nor did Stoicism stand alone. In the days of Julius Caesar and of Augustus every educated man fell strongly under the influence of many phases of current philosophic teaching. The modern scholar most readily appreciates the character of this teaching from reading the moral works of Cicero. At first its extremely rhetorical character unfavourably impresses us, until we consider that this rhetorical character, an extreme care for the form, even at the expense of the substance, is an inevitable characteristic of all Greek literature, and even of Greek art. The Greeks were always, like the French of our own time, so intent upon saying things well, that they would more readily forgive jejuneness and poverty of thought than inelegance in expression. In all this, Cicero and the Romans were their apt pupils. But when one has passed beyond this first impression, one realizes what a high level of urbanity, of patriotism, of conscious pursuit of high ideals, is maintained in the philosophic

discussions of Cicero and his friends. They appear not only as cultivated men, but as high-minded and almost Christian gentlemen.

My purpose is not to show that the Pagan world had no great need of Christianity. The whole object of these lectures is to prove the contrary; and the verdict passed by fact and history is one which cannot be gainsaid. All that I wish to maintain is that much admirable material existed for appropriation by Christianity. The need of Christian baptism existed, not only in case of the classes sunk in vice and misery, but in case of those which lived an openly respectable and virtuous life. But there was not a need for a complete change in daily life, such as would have been conspicuous to the world.

The baptism of Græco-Roman civic society was a gradual process. It was begun by St Paul, who, as Professor Ramsay has insisted, was proud of his Roman citizenship. He consecrated all life by his principle, 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' In place of the mere respect for custom, or desire for the esteem of friends and neighbours, he puts a consciousness of the presence of God, and of His care for all the deeds of daily life. Here, surely, we have the essential inwardness of Christianity. Although Paul expected to live to see the second coming of his Master, yet he had no scorn for the duties of the father, the husband, and the tradesman. His view is directed beyond the visible act to the inner spirit. And, like his Master, he makes a right relation to the will of God the sum of virtue and the guiding principle of life.

There is no part of the teaching of St Paul which is more full of the essential spirit of Christianity than that which bears upon the sanctification of daily life. Even in eating and drinking, the Christian was to do all to the glory of God. If he was called being a slave, his servile condition need be no hindrance to the life of the spirit; he was to show his conversion by abandoning eye-service and man-pleasing, and acting as in the presence of God. He was to be diligent in his secular business, but at the same time full of Christian fervour. He was to labour diligently, in order that he might be able to help his poorer brethren, since such help when given to the deserving is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God.

If we read these precepts and exhortations with discernment, we shall see that they are not at all applicable in a diseased, dishonest, corrupt state of civil society. St Paul does not lay down, as some members of the Christian Social Union in our day assert, that the whole commercial system is out of joint and needs renovation on fresh principles. He seems to think that family life and trade and civic business are in a fairly healthy condition: it is that which is within which needs cleansing—motive, will, and purpose, the heart out of which are the issues of life. St Paul feels that everything in human nature develops from within; that when the grace of God works in conscience and feeling it will turn what is trivial and mechanical in daily life, what we feel to be necessary rather than good or bad, into means for showing in the world the glory of God, and exhibiting His will working amid human surroundings.

The lofty line of Christian duty sketched out by St Paul was not in all respects followed by his successors. We know that the Roman Government from time to time, in some degree, though not at all in the degree usually imagined, persecuted the Christians as bad citizens and dangerous to the State. How far the Government was justified in this view I cannot now inquire. In the early history of Christianity there are many turns and tendencies, some leading to good and some to evil. I must be content to observe that at all periods there must have been a mass of Roman citizens who fully performed their duties as such, and yet were good and loyal followers of Christ, though they may not have been among the most prominent members of the Church.

Though the Church in most periods has been too ready to give up the ordinary civil life as beneath the level of true Christianity, yet from time to time efforts have been made within the pale of Christianity to consecrate it afresh. One of the most notable of these, at which I can but glance in passing, is the formation of the third or lay order of Franciscans, an order of men and women who, while remaining in civic and family life, should yet devote themselves to the cause of their society.

## V

The civic and domestic virtues of the Romans were after all but a phase of the sense of justice and law, of rights and corresponding duties, which marked out the Roman people among all the nations of antiquity,

and which made the Roman legal system the basis on which the stability of society has ever since been built. Sir Henry Maine was among the first to enforce the view, which in recent years has been generally accepted, that it was the stable and solid foundation of Roman law which for the first time in the history of mankind made a barrier which no conquest by invading tribes could overthrow; on which they were compelled to erect whatever civic construction they might find necessary to secure the countries of Europe from anarchy and senseless bloodshed.

It is easily to be understood that between the religion of the New Testament and the political and social fabric of the Roman Empire there were few points of contact. The Founder of Christianity was willing to render to Cæsar what was Cæsar's; but His Kingdom was not of this world; His legislation applied to a region beyond the sway of all-powerful Rome. And St Paul, though proud of the honour of being a Roman citizen, and always recommending submission to existing political government, looks upon that government as something wholly outside his mission. It was not, indeed, until Christianity became the religion of the Empire that it came into close contact with the political institutions and the legal system of that Empire. Still later, when all that remained of the Roman system in the West was the civil institutions of Rome and the Christian religion, which stood together in face of the loosely organized but individually powerful Teutons, the institutions and the religion were driven into closer



and closer contact. The Pope in Italy succeeded the Emperor, and the Bishop took the place of the magistrate, subject to the predominant power of the invading kings. The Church preserved in Europe the Canon Law, erected on a Roman basis, and of the greatest importance to the development of the northern nations.

But that which was the chief gift of Rome to the world has been set at naught by Christianity. I speak of the Roman spirit of patriotism, the intense feeling of the early statesmen and soldiers of the Republic that they belonged not to themselves, but to Rome, for whom, as their mother, they were willing to spend and be spent, to devote not only all their goods, but every drop of their blood. This splendid civic patriotism was, of course, not peculiar to Rome; in Greece the Spartans had given a memorable and immortal example of it. But it was certainly the life-blood of Rome. Christianity, rising in an age when imperialism had succeeded the narrower patriotism, never came into contact with the latter in its full freshness and force. Had it done so, it may be doubted how far it would have regarded city-feeling as a thing to be cherished and perpetuated. Christianity appealed to the individual, and proclaimed high duties to man as man. The intermediate loyalties to a clan, a city, a nation, it did not in the same way favour. Whether there be any final irreconcilability between these duties and the essential spirit of Christianity is a question not only of the past but one of great importance at the present time, since in many countries—Italy, France, Austria, America

—we see a keen collision between the power of the Roman Church and that of national feeling and aspiration. It is by no means, as Romanists often think, a clashing between the spiritual and the material, but rather between two spiritual forces, Catholicism and Nationality. We watch this conflict with the utmost interest; but its final issue is yet hidden in the clouds.

It must be remembered that just as Christianity never came in touch with the true Hellas, so it never came in touch with the true Rome, the noble Rome of the Republic, the Rome which overthrew Pyrrhus and Hannibal, and welded Italy into a great power. The Rome of early Christianity was quite other, the head of a vast empire. The special Roman virtues were largely decayed. What we have to deal with in modern days is neither duty to a city nor loyalty to an universal empire, but the feeling of patriotism to a particular country. No feature of our times is more marked than the revival on all sides of strong national feeling, which perhaps has affected England less than other nations because we are more nearly than other nations in the cosmopolitan position of ancient Rome. But it is certain that in Europe and in America Christianity will have to make fresh terms with the spirit of nationality, so little appreciated by the Papal Curia.

## LECTURE VII

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

NOTHING is a surer indication of life than the power of meeting new conditions. And in the evolution of plants and animals, and to a far higher extent in human evolution, we find a further adaptation, an adaptation to conditions which are yet in the future. This fact is one of the best and surest proofs that purpose and intelligence lie at the roots of the universe. Nothing in the history of the Christian Church is more remarkable than the way in which, by Divine Providence, it was thus adapted for meeting unseen contingencies. It is true that we also find in the history of Christianity another and less pleasing rule, that very often the ways of progress are blocked by survivals, by the persistence of institutions and beliefs necessary at an earlier stage of development, but now become useless and even dangerous. At present it is the former of these phenomena that calls for our attention.

In the age of the Antonines, when Christianity was taking a definite and lasting form, it looked as if the world had attained to an equilibrium which might last

for an indefinite time. Within the Roman Empire all was order and system; without there were indeed scattered tribes of brave barbarians, but save the Parthian Empire, no power which could inspire serious alarm to the master of so many legions as the Roman Emperor. Roman civilization seemed to rest on as solid a basis as does now European civilization. But within little more than a century, all was altered. The Parthian power, which looked so stately, had vanished after a single great defeat by the Persians. The power and the prospects of the barbarians of the north had steadily grown. Already Rome was beginning to be dependent upon them for soldiers; already they were beginning to feel that before long the ripe fruit of dominion would fall into their hands. The waters of the flood, destined to sweep over all the countries of the Roman Empire and to destroy the fair fruit of centuries of civilization, were growing deeper and deeper, and were beginning to open for themselves channels.

Great statesmen could not in the Antonine age foresee the fall of the Empire. And the Fathers of the Church were not great statesmen, but men of very limited outlook, and mainly occupied with what was present. If they looked into the future it was not to see on what lines the Church should develop, but to anticipate the second coming of their Master in power and glory to make for Himself a kingdom. But through the unconscious leaders of the Church the ever-living spirit of Christ worked to ends of which they did not dream. The caterpillar does not know anything of its future, but a power works in it to slowly transform it

to something far higher in function, and while the change is going on it is protected by the hard skin of the chrysalis. Something like this took place in the Church, which became hardened, and even given over to materialism, as a preparation for the ages when the old civilization had a hard battle to preserve any part of its organization amid the storms of barbarian invasion.

It is a commonplace of liberal historians of the Church that it was by an adaptation to her own society of the organism and the legal ideas of Rome that Christianity adapted herself for survival. There has never been anything in the world like the name and fame of Rome, when Rome was at her greatest. And as at Antioch and Alexandria Christian teachers spoke in the manner of Greek philosophy, just as naturally the officials who were at the head of the churches of the Western Empire, of Gaul, Italy, and Africa, used a language like that adopted in the Roman courts of law, and thought of the Christian societies under their charge as of civil communities which needed discipline. The discipline which was of great value in holding together the Christian communities under the Empire became even far more necessary when it was available for the restraint of the wild passions and savage impulses of the barbarians of the North.

When Aëtius, the last great soldier of Rome, had fallen by assassination, and the Goths had sacked the Eternal City, St Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in Africa, wrote his *Civitas Dei*, in which he may almost be said to have baptized the dying Roman Empire, and secured to it spiritual life for the future. He taught

that God had permitted the ruin of the visible Empire of Rome in order that the new City of God might be established. But to him the Kingdom of God was no mere dream of the future, nor an invisible influence spreading through the hearts of men, but a visible reality, a great organized power stretching on from generation to generation, and including all those who had by baptism been admitted to it and maintained their connection with it by the Christian Communion. Looking back after many centuries we see that Augustine was no dreamer, but one of those men of rare insight who discern the tendencies which lie far below the surfaces of things. It was true that the Christian Church was about to arise uninjured from the sack of Italy, and to assert in a new form the centrality of Rome in the history of Europe.

To one who believes in spiritual religion, and who realizes that from the first the battle of Christianity was for the transformation of Judaism and Paganism by a gospel of the divine will, this process must needs be repellent. We suffer so much every day from the sacerdotalism, the materialism, the secularity which came into the Church after the conversion of Constantine had put it on another plane of being, that we find it not easy to do justice to the Christianity of the early Middle Ages. But the spirit of history is a spirit of tolerance. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.* Fanciful reconstructions of what might have been—for example, if the Arianism of the Goths had led the way to a broader religion, or the theology of Clement and Origen had struck deeper roots—may interest us, but cannot take us far. It may be that what took place had



to take place, and we may conceive that the divine will for a time changed its way of working. As St Paul is reported to have said at Athens, 'The times of ignorance God tolerated.'

The hardening and complete organization of the Church took place on many lines. I cannot, of course, treat of it in detail; but I will select some of the most notable parts of the process for a brief exposition. I will speak of (1) the formation of the canon of Scripture; (2) the settlement of the creed; (3) the materialization of the sacraments; (4) the formation of the order of bishops; (5) the primacy of Rome; (6) monasticism. And in each case I shall try to discover what is the source from which the Church took the idea which she absorbed.

## I

(1) *The Formation of the Canon of Scripture.*—After many discussions, by a slow process there emerged about 180 A.D. at Rome a generally accepted list of works admitted as a part of the Scriptures, and as having divine authority. These of course fell into the two groups, of Jewish works taken over from the Jewish Church, and works written by Christian apostles and teachers. In forming the canon the Church went altogether on Jewish precedent. The Jews had for ages attached an extraordinary value to their sacred books, and placing them in a class apart, had guarded them with astonishing care. Some of the schools of thought regarded these books as the immediate word of God, verbally inspired; while to all Jews the books ascribed to the authorship of Moses

were the very foundation of the national life, a limit in thought and a guide in action. It was some time before it occurred to the Christians to place works of their own writers on the same august level; and we can imagine the horror which must have been aroused by the boldness of Marcion and other Gnostics who rejected the Jewish scriptures altogether from their place of honour. To the Gnostics, indeed, the formation of a canon of New Testament writings is largely due, and they were the first commentators on it, though their exegesis was extravagant enough. None of the religions of the Greeks rested upon sacred books, though, of course, further east the Zend Avesta and the Vedas were in their way sacred. At a later time the Koran was to the Mohammedans a foundation of faith even more important than were the Scriptures to the Catholic Church. The formation of a canon of Scripture did not at once determine how its different books were to be regarded; and in this matter there were wide divergencies of opinion among authorities. Some regarded the Jewish scriptures as belonging to a lower stage of religion, as the writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* teaches, and containing only types and adumbrations of a fuller revelation to come. But the catholic or victorious view is that which we find first in the epistle of Barnabas, that Christianity was the one absolute and perfect religion for all time, and so was taught even in the Jewish sacred books, though the Jews themselves failed to understand the true meaning of them.

The need which existed for the exaltation of a sacred book by the Church scarcely requires to be dwelt

on. If, in spite of the veneration paid to the Prophets and the Psalms, many abnormal phases of belief made their appearance; and if, in spite of the authority of consecrated lives of the Founder, fanaticism and pious romance were always at work to remove Him from a natural historic setting, what would have become of the Church without these restraints? Her Bible has been in all ages her most precious possession, and has tended constantly to curb the aberrations of pious unreason, and to keep open a way back to the original basis of the faith. The extravagant veneration in which the Scriptures as a whole were enshrined was but a hard shell to protect them against assault and injury, and to convey them safe to future generations.

## II

(2) *The Settlement of the Creed.*—To those who read early Church history, the whole life of the society may well seem centred in the discussion of doctrinal views, and the arrangement of them into schemes, to be accepted by Christians under pain of being declared heretical. Nor is there any feature in which the Church of the second and third centuries differed more fundamentally from the early society. In the Gospels, as everyone knows, there is scarcely a vestige of anything that can be called doctrine. The Epistles of St Paul contain a good deal of doctrine; but then nothing in the early history of Christianity is more striking than the smallness of the influence upon it of the real Pauline doctrine, which was far too intellectual and difficult to be taken in by ordinary Christians. But though the Church did not, like the reformers of the

sixteenth century, make out a creed based upon St Paul, it did work out creeds in a very persistent way. These creeds were usually enlargements of the formulæ used in Christian baptism, when a confession of faith was required. And the simple formula of the Ethiopian, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,'<sup>1</sup> was soon expanded into something far more complicated.

But while the use of a creed arose in the process of missionary work, it is not difficult to see what was the nearest parallel to a creed. No profession of religious belief was in use among the Greeks and other peoples of Asia or Egypt. Even in the case of the Mysteries, it was purity of life and not acceptance of doctrine which was a condition of initiation. Nor did the Jew repeat any creed; he had to observe the law, but he had not to express his belief in the miracles of Moses or Elijah, or as to the hierarchy of the angels. A creed is primarily an intellectual thing; and it is among the philosophers of Greece that we must look for its historic origin, or at least for the cause of its extraordinary development.

At the time of the Christian origins, well educated men were ranged as followers of this or that way of philosophy, as Stoics or Epicureans, Academics or Sceptics. Each accepted a set of beliefs, formulated by one of the great masters of thought, as to the nature of the *summum bonum*, the being of the gods and their relations to men, the constitution of the visible universe. This creed, for it amounted to a

<sup>1</sup> This phrase does not seem to belong to the original text of *Acts*. See the Revised Version.

creed, each was prepared to defend against all comers, and by their creeds men fell into groups. According to the principles of their creeds they in a measure regulated their lives, and in the strength of them they were prepared to meet danger and death. Now, to men thus trained, the Christian religion would naturally present itself as a new and more spiritual philosophy. And we know that it did appear in this light to the apologists such as Justin and Tatian, as well as to the more highly educated of the Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen. There was a *gnosis* or wisdom which abode in the Church as well as a *gnosis* to which the Church was hostile. And as philosophy decayed, and Christianity flourished more and more, there was a great transference of dialectical and rhetorical talent from the Pagan to the Christian field; and the abilities which had worked out philosophic schemes turned more and more to the shaping of Christian creeds. This was done, and at the time could only be done, in the language of the current philosophy. Certain views in psychology, in ethics, in cosmology, had become generally current, most of them developed out of Platonism, and it was around these views that the articles of the creed were formed. The new speculations offered as fine a field for intellectual subtleties as the old.

Yet in the formation of the Christian Creed there was an entirely new element: a high ethical earnestness, and a conviction that there was a right and a wrong in belief, and that right views as to God and Christ led to salvation, and wrong views to destruction, however deficient the Christian morals may

have been on the side of philosophic ethics. Thus, instead of arguing one with another in the peaceable, interminable manner of the Greek philosophers, the Christian Fathers fought hard for their views by every means in their power; and the councils by which the creeds were formulated became battle-grounds. When the emperors took the matter up, every step in the formulation of doctrine was followed by proscription and exile of the defeated searchers after truth.

The Fathers of the Church had certainly some justification for the grim war which they waged against heresy. For in some cases Christian belief and Christian practice were so closely linked together that if the belief were not accepted the practice lost its stability, and a serious moral danger threatened the Church. The great strife, for instance, between Athanasius and Arius as to the nature of Christ deeply involved the whole character of Christianity; and had the victory gone otherwise, the history of the Church would have been very different. But to a modern critic it appears that with questions of practical and vital import there were mingled others of a merely speculative and otiose character. How could it greatly matter, for instance, on what day of the year Easter was kept? Many of the speculations as to the person of Christ had no ascertainable relation to fact, to experience, or to conduct.

It is by no means an easy task for anyone to enter fully into the conditions of a past age, and to see why what now appears obvious was not at the time recognized. But until we have done this our judg-



ment is likely to be superficial. We stand amazed at the elaborate distinctions of the so-called Athanasian Creed, and the boldness of its assertions as to matters on which human minds will certainly never gain any clear knowledge. But at the same time we are bound to recognize that creed as a masterpiece of a particular kind of reasoning. When it was formulated Greek philosophy was dead or dormant, and the intricacies of the Christian Creed furnished one of the best fields of exercise for the reason of man. When the fierce and unintellectual races of the North poured into the Roman domain, what would have become of their wits if they had not been able in some degree to sharpen them on the discussion of points of Christian doctrine? If the Church had only cared about those doctrines which had a close relation to practice, the logical and speculative reason of mediæval Christians would have fallen far below even the moderate level to which it attained.

And, on the whole, in spite of the over-elaboration of the creeds, and their attempt to express in words what can never be matter of knowledge, in spite of the bitterness of school against school, in spite of the intrusion of politics and local elements, the Church did in general adhere to what was essential in Christianity. She clung tenaciously to certain fixed data, the divinity of her Master and yet to His humanity, to a monotheism which yet included the variety of divine manifestation, to the reality of the spiritual world, to the deadliness of revolt against the Divine will. After all, we may trace the spirit of the Master in the main currents of Church doctrine.

And even at the present day, though our intellectual horizon is so vastly different from that of the Greek Church of the third and fourth centuries, we may often find in the phrases of the creeds which then arose a meaning which has only to be set forth in other terms to be recognized as profound truth. In refusing to follow the lead of some of the gifted and original heresiarchs, such as Marcion, Arius, and Pelagius, the Church was really preserving for future ages a sacred deposit which has for us in these latter days a value and a meaning; though it must not, of course, be allowed to prevent us from following fresh revelations of the same spirit.

### III

(3) *The Materialization of the Sacraments.*—I have already tried to show that the sacraments of Christianity, though they probably did not arise from direct borrowing of the ceremonies of the mystic religions of later Greece, yet certainly sprang up in ground which had been prepared for them by those religions. For the materialization of the sacraments we need seek no origin but the constitution of human nature. The mass of mankind tends to be materialistic, dominated by that which is seen and felt, unable to recognize spiritual truth unless it is incorporated in some material vehicle. The doctrine of St Paul as to baptism and the Lord's Supper had been a mystic and spiritual doctrine; he would never have dreamed of attributing any value to the mere ceremony apart from faith and love in the person partaking. But, as I have before observed, the Pauline teaching was far

above the heads of the early Christians, and only a few of them could thoroughly understand it. The introduction of infant baptism, in addition to the previously practised baptism of adults, paved the way for a belief that grace was conveyed by the mere sprinkling of water. And as the Eucharist has been almost since the beginning of Christianity the very centre of the religion, the occasion of the most vivid of spiritual emotions, it was but natural that the pious should vie one with the other in attributing to it a miraculous efficacy, and that Christian Fathers should try to find an explanation of that efficacy in theories which made the connection of the sacrament with the Founder not only close and constant, but even of a material nature. The reception of the body and blood of Christ could not be a mere metaphor, nor a merely spiritual partaking, but must be an actual fact, if a miraculous one, belonging to the world of sense and time.

But although such materialism is quite natural in all countries, yet there is a special reason why a Church which more and more centred in Rome should be especially liable to invasion by religious materialism: because the religion of Pagan Rome was in a marked degree materialist. We have already seen that, at the beginning of the Christian era, what was accepted as religion on the Tiber was a mere series of acts to be performed daily as the Calendar went, strictly in accordance with precedent. It was a matter of dress, of posture, of action; the words had to be recited, even if no meaning attached to them, and the victims had to be sacrificed in recognized fashion,

though even the sacrificer did not know to what power in the frame of the world he was offering them. It astonishes us that men like Sulla and Cæsar, who seem to us complete agnostics, could be the heads of Roman religion. But so long as they performed the right ceremonies on the right day, with the right words and motions, no one insisted on inquiring what at the time was passing in their minds.

It is easy to see how this burden of ceremonialism pressed down on the Christian Church of Rome, especially after the Empire had become nominally Christian. The emperors, who had been High Pontiffs of the Pagan religion of Rome, became the heads of the Church; and much of the formalism which had belonged to the former office was retained in the latter. And when the emperors passed away, their virtual successors, the Popes, were ready to take their place.

It might seem very natural that a materialism which was invading in the cultivated days of the later Roman Empire would become more deeply rooted in the times of rudeness and barbarism which followed. To some extent this was the case. No doubt the materialism which was finally registered in the doctrine of transubstantiation as accepted by the Council of Trent became more and more fixed in most of Europe. But in spite of the rudeness and brutality of the invading Teutons, their tendency towards materialism was less marked than that in Latin countries. As we shall see later, the spirit of the North had no sooner grown to maturity than it rebelled, first and foremost, against the materialization of the Communion.

## IV

(4) *The Rise of the Order of Bishops.*—The necessity of adopting some kind of organization was soon realized by the primitive Church. Although, in that age of fervour, spirit was everything and form indifferent, yet it is an essential characteristic of human nature that all inner feeling should struggle towards an outward and visible expression. The Church as much required some visible form as the mollusk at the bottom of the ocean requires a shell to protect him against the ravenous monsters of the deep. From the very beginning there was a sort of oligarchy of the Twelve Apostles, to whom was presently added St Paul as the Apostle of the Gentiles, in many ways a force as great as that of the rest combined, yet apparently never quite received by them as a colleague. In *Acts*, however, on certain occasions at Jerusalem, it is not any of the Twelve who seems to hold the presidency, but James, the brother of the Lord. It almost looks as if, apart from the fall of Jerusalem, there might have dwelt in that city an hereditary head of the Christian community, just as in Islam the descendants of the Prophet constitute a caste. But the Church was called to other and wider destinies. Rome, not Jerusalem, was to be its centre of government. We also read in St Paul's Epistles of many kinds of leaders in the Pauline churches. There appear the three grades of apostles, prophets or preachers, and teachers; but we gain no impression of a regular organization; rather of a pure democracy in which every man is estimated according to his gifts and his achievements,

and exercises such power as by personal predominance he can acquire.

But regular officials were soon seen to be necessary. And here, as in other cases, the Church did not receive any direct command from her Founder, nor did she invent, but she adopted from her surroundings, and put that which she adopted to serve her own purposes. Now, it is a very suggestive fact that the earliest Church organization that we know of is to be found neither at Jerusalem nor at Rome, but in the churches of Asia, most of which owed their foundation, at least in part, to St Paul. We know that the bridge over which Christianity passed from the Jewish to the Greek world was the Jewish diaspora with its synagogue. The Jewish race had spread, in the times after Alexander the Great, into almost all the great cities of which he and his successors founded so many, and there dwelt in a quarter of their own, abiding by their own laws, meeting weekly in their synagogues, occasionally even having long and bitter feuds with the Greeks and Syrians who dwelt in the same cities. As the Roman governors did not for a while distinguish between Jews and Christians, regarding the Christians as a mere Jewish sect, it is clear that the Christians must have been outwardly organized in the cities of Asia in the same way as the Jews. From the official point of view, there would be the Jewish synagogue and the dissenting Jewish or the Christian synagogue, to which Gentiles were admitted without undergoing circumcision or strictly keeping the Mosaic law.

As soon, however, as we can trace in the churches a



definite organization, we find mention of the three orders of officials who, even to this day, are usual in the great churches: bishops, presbyters or priests, and deacons. The origin of these offices has been much in dispute, but it is at least a probable view which regards all these terms, *episkopos* or overseer, *presbyteros* or elder, and *diakonos* or attendant, as belonging to the civil organization of the cities of Asia Minor and Syria, which, having no part in serious politics, developed in a marked degree the system of ornamental and honorific posts to give a sort of dignity to those of the citizens who excelled the rest in wealth or in exertions for the common good. It was natural that the religious societies in Asia Minor should adopt these magistracies from the cities, often assigning to them more serious and real functions. And therefore that the early Christian churches should have taken the same course is perfectly comprehensible. At first the duties of the bishop seem to have been mainly financial, he was scarcely more than a business head of the society: but in time he gained a position as teacher and responsible for doctrine. And after a while still more imposing functions were attributed to him.

In the clergy of the Catholic Church another strain makes its appearance in time. If in their hierarchy we may trace the influence of civic organization, in their functions we find elements which are by no means secular. The sacred character of the priest, who belongs to a consecrated order, and is guardian of the divine mysteries, cannot be found either in Jewish rabbi or in Hellenistic official. Its analogues will be

found rather in the colleges of priests and of heirodules which, from a very early time, belonged to the cult of the gods and goddesses of Asia. At such cities as Comana Hierapolis and Ephesus there was attached to the service of the reigning deities a crowd of servants and interpreters, with whom those deities lived, so to speak, on terms of intimacy, who interpreted to men their will, and promised their aid to those who approached them with gifts and worship. Some Asiatic cities, such as Olba in Cilicia, were governed by a dynasty of priests who combined secular and sacred offices, like the Prince-Bishops of the Middle Ages, and constituted a kind of theocracy.

Naturally, the control of the mysteries to which they could admit, or from which they could exclude votaries, gave to the priests of such deities as Isis and Cybele and Mithras a great power over the adherents of their deities. A similar function fell in time to the lot of the Christian priesthood, to whom were confided the most sacred of the rites of Christianity: who held the door of the sheepfold, and could excommunicate those who opposed their power. By degrees in the Church the personal inspiration of the prophet, the teacher, and the missionary, who are so prominent in the book of *Acts*, gives way to the power of an organized priesthood, consecrated by the laying on of hands, and entrusted with the power of the keys.

Of course the Christian priesthood stood always at a higher level than the Pagan. The inwardness of its origin abode always in some degree even in the baser forms of Christianity. The stewards of the Christian mysteries were not content with mere

ceremonial purity in their votaries ; nor was religion anywhere regarded as wholly independent of morality. Yet the dying down of the fervid inspiration of the first Christians, and the formation of a hard skeleton of creed and a crust of mystery and ritual, cannot be a pleasant thing to observe.

It is possible to trace the gradual growth of the order of Bishops. Need for such rulers grew stronger and stronger as the Gnostics tried to eat out the heart of Christianity, and the Montanists tried to dissolve the framework of the young society. It was in the course of conflict with these foes that the guiding strings fell more and more into episcopal hands, so that we find Irenæus affirming that the bishop represents and embodies his church, and that whoever opposes the bishop opposes God ; while Cyprian goes still further and boldly says that the church is in the bishop. Hence there soon arose a fiction that the Twelve Apostles had from the beginning appointed bishops in the churches, and that the bishop held by an uninterrupted tradition his authority from Jesus Christ Himself. The historic facts are very different ; it took a long time for the office of the bishop to emerge out of the presbyterian form of government. But history in all ages has consisted largely in accepted fictions ; and what men believe to have taken place is very often more important, even from the point of view of the scientific historian, than what actually took place.

In part the authority of the bishop accrued because he stood for the organization which had the power of formulating doctrine and of administering sacraments.

He held the keys of the Church and of the future life. He had the power to forgive sins and to expel from the visible Church. But the position of the bishop was important not only because of his spiritual powers ; from the point of view of ecclesiastical politics he was indispensable. The Christian churches in Turkey and Syria have during the last centuries been saved from ruin by their bishops. In those churches the ordinary priests are allowed, and even expected, to marry ; but the bishop must be unmarried, because he has to protect his church against oppression and misrule, and, being without a family, he is less easily bribed or intimidated. The same function fell to the bishops in the troubled days of Roman decay and barbarian invasion. When the civil rulers lost their power in the Roman provinces, the bishops remained and took their place as the representatives of the civilized urban population in their dealings with the conquering invaders. Had the Teutonic tribes remained heathen, the bishops would only have been, as in Turkey, a power to mitigate a painful servitude. But since all by degrees accepted Christianity, the bishops became spiritual leaders of the invaders as well as the civil leaders of the subject population, and a fusion of races became possible which led directly to the rise of modern civilization. It is not always easy to trace in the maze of history the workings of divine power ; but the rise of the episcopal order is so clearly seen to have been necessary to the salvation of the Church and the gradual modification of barbarism in the early Middle Ages, that we are justified in this case in speaking, in language which is at least approximately

true, of the control of events by divine Providence, and the gradual working out of a divine purpose. As the wings of birds are gradually developed through long ages before their use in flying is possible, or as the human brain appears among savages who do not understand its full use, so the order of bishops seems to have been destined to greater usefulness in ages after the time when it first arose.

In these matters we must always keep apart two things—the origin of an institution, and its value in subsequent times. It is because these things have been confused that the historians of the Church have been very eager to prove that the organization of the early Church was planned by the Founder, and was from the very first in principle what it afterwards became. In particular, a great deal of ingenuity has been applied, from the third century onwards, in trying to provide links to connect the Apostles on the one side and the earliest bishops of the great cities on the other. For Rome a series of bishops has been provided, beginning with Peter and going on continuously.

Of course this cannot be done without a good deal of falsification of history. As a matter of fact, we are able from our documents clearly to trace a gap of time after the Apostles had died and before the bishops had arisen, a time when the care of the churches was in the hands of committees of presbyters or elders. In the books of the New Testament—if we except the *First Epistle to Timothy*, which is not regarded as authentic—there is no mention of bishops as a distinct order. In later documents we can trace the gradual rise of the episcopal function.

We see that the bishop was at first merely the presiding presbyter; but that as necessity for stronger organization and more discipline arose, his hands were gradually strengthened.

We have to avoid two false extremes. To say with the believer in apostolic succession that from the beginning a series of bishops have handed down to our times the sacred gift of the Holy Spirit communicated to them by the Apostles, is to defy the testimony of history. To say, on the other hand, that since bishops did not hold any definite function in the Church until the second century, therefore they represent only a corruption of primitive Christianity, is to deny the laws of evolution and the presence of Christ in His Church. History clearly shows the order of bishops to have been of great value to the primitive society, and in later times. Whether for us in these days the episcopal organization of the Church is the best, is a question to be decided by the study of history and the results of experience. The growth of Episcopacy among the Methodists, and its spread in North America and the English colonies, is a very striking fact, which can scarcely be explained save by attributing great value to the institution. As the Free churches of Christendom organize themselves more completely, and draw closer to one another, a class of officers or overseers becomes more necessary; and there are obvious dangers in leaving the duties of oversight to be exercised by volunteers without recognized position or authority. I think that the more the episcopal office is cut free from fanciful claims and superstitious reverence, the more



useful its true functions will appear. The whole tendency of modern society, even in the freest states, is towards more complete organization in education, in commerce, in social matters; and this tendency must affect Christianity as well as other institutions.

## V

(5) *The Primacy of Rome.*—Of this in Western Europe we must take much the same view as we took of the institution of Episcopacy. As the bishops were necessary to replace the civil authority of Rome, so the Popes were necessary to continue the line of Roman emperors and to save for the world some of the wisdom accumulated by the political genius of Rome. Western Europe would have fallen to pieces and become a chaos of independent states but for the unity of the Church; and the unity of the Church could only be maintained by a spiritual ruler established at Rome and inheriting the prestige of the Roman name and the Roman political tradition. The great abuses of the Papal power in the later Middle Ages have induced many historians to regard that power as from the first an usurpation and an impiety. No doubt it was based in a great measure on successful ambition and intrigue, and supported by forged documents and utterly false views of history. Yet if one tries to think what Europe would have been in the feudal days without a well-organized spiritual power to curb the brutality of the nobles, and to throw an ægis over the weak and helpless, one realizes how vast have been the historic contributions of the Papacy to the happiness of man-

kind. The more frankly we acknowledge this, the freer shall we be in our inquiry whether in our own days the extreme centralization of Christianity, and the neglect of the particular genius of this or that nation for a particular form of it, be a good thing.

## VI

(6) *Monasticism*.—If the priests and deacons of the Christian Church were the soldiers of Christ, warring to preserve the spiritual life from being overcome by the flesh, then the regular orders of monks were the guard, the highly disciplined nucleus who formed, as it were, the spear-head of the host.

It would require an elaborate historical investigation to determine whence the monastic idea made its way into the Church. There were many sources whence it might have come. The Essenes of Palestine, about whom very little is known, seem to have lived in ascetic communities, with a spiritual ideal of life. Four or five centuries before the rise of Christianity the inner parts of Asia had been invaded by Buddhist missionaries, leading the ascetic life which Buddhism had adopted or adapted from the Gymnosophists of India, living by alms and mortifying the flesh in every painful way. But since the hermits and the communities of hermits which made up the first monasteries come to light in the first instance in Egypt, we are perhaps justified in supposing that it was from the recluses of the Serapeum in Memphis that the monastic idea passed into Christianity. Whatever we moderns may be disposed to think of

monasticism, there can be little question that it was a marvellous antidote to many of the troubles and evils of the time. Even St Paul, in the first Corinthian Epistle, expresses himself as in favour of celibacy in many cases, because the cares of the present life interfere with the demands of that which is higher. And in so saying he after all touched on the borders of a profound and deep-lying truth. It is certainly necessary to the spiritual health of the world that those who are fitted for the studying of invisible things and the exercise of religious influence should be freed from material anxiety, and allowed to give unhindered attention to the things of the spirit. And when the whole civilized world was convulsed in the throes of disease and decay, a marvellous refuge from the intolerable strain of life was offered by the hermit's cell or by the monastery to thousands who were wanting in the natural spirits or the physical courage which might have enabled them to hold their own in the world. Later on, through the ages of fierce struggle and triumphant barbarism, it was in the cloister as in an ark that some remnants of learning and civilization survived. Into the cloister flocked the finer, the more intellectual natures, leaving the ordinary business of the world to ordinary people. And to multitudes of women the nunnery offered the one safe refuge from persecuting lust or barbarous outrage.

But this is the lowest way of looking at the matter. No great pursuit ever flourishes in the world unless it be accompanied by a certain amount of fanaticism. The monks and the hermits were the fanatics of the spiritual life; their devotion was not according to

the measure of reason, but of passion. They, or at least the best of them, wholly give themselves up to the idea of a higher life to be lived amid human surroundings; thus they kept the torch of Christian passion alight in the dark ages of the world.

In all the movements of the Church of which I have spoken, we see the same process going on, the adoption from other religions or from secular life of such institutions as were necessary to preserve Christianity through a time of stress and danger. The instinct of self-preservation, the most imperious instinct of our nature, acting sometimes to a conscious end, but more often towards an end not yet visible, formed a body to protect Christianity—and not Christianity only, but all that escaped the wreck of ancient society—to future ages. It may occur to many that however necessary this organization was, it had no relation to the Christian baptism of which I have spoken hitherto. It was not a process of converting what was in the world to a purer and more spiritual life, but a process of conforming to the world. As a general statement this can scarcely be denied. The Church lost spirituality, and with every century seemed to recede further from the essential Christianity of the New Testament. One can only reply that in the world as we know it, good and evil, light and darkness, progress and retrogression, are inseparably mixed. Divine Providence does not save the world by sudden and conspicuous interpositions, but by the slow working of human forces, not without some divine aid. If the Teutonic invasions and the wreck of ancient civilization were necessary as a means towards the

birth of a new and, on the whole, a better order, why may we not think that the temporary materialization of the Church was also necessary to her more complete development in the future? On this subject, the difficulty of which I fully recognize, I may have more to say in future lectures.

## LECTURE VIII

# THE MEDIÆVAL THEOCRACY

### I

WHEN we inquire of those who have made careful study of the history of mediæval Europe what age best presents a picture of Christianity outwardly and visibly triumphant, they point to the thirteenth century; and the glamour which hangs over the Church at that time is so great that even one like myself, who has made no detailed study of mediæval history, cannot but see the main outlines of its splendour. It was the age of St Francis and of St Louis, of Bonaventura and of Thomas Aquinas, of Pope Innocent III. and of Dante. It was the culminating point of a great process which had been going on since the fall of the Roman Empire; and in some ways Europe stood as a Christian community at a higher point than it has reached before or since.

In England, we have been used to speak with a certain contempt of the 'dark ages' which preceded the Reformation. In a limited degree the phrase is justified, as we shall presently see; but it covers a



terrible want of historic knowledge and ethical appreciation. And we have in all our great cities that which should have hindered us from despising the high thoughts and noble deeds of our fathers. Let any man who has any æsthetic sensibility, or power of taking in ideas through the eyes, wander in one of our great cathedrals, and let its magnificence slowly sink into him, a magnificence which does not consist merely in size and massiveness, but in the nobility of the lines of the arches, the tracery of the windows, the detailed beauty of the capitals of columns and of the doorways. Our cathedrals are but a wreck of what they were once. The glorious stained glass is lost, and often replaced by vile imitations; the figures of the saints vanished or mutilated; often the whole arrangement made vulgar by the interference of the modern architect or the prominence of tasteless tombs. The bright colours of the ceilings, the rich decoration of the chapels, the harmony of part with part—these are mostly gone. Yet even as they stand, these vast Christian temples fill with delight and with awe the minds of all who have any native susceptibility.

We archæologists have learned that great monuments of art do not spring up spontaneously or without reference to their environment. They are the flowers; but the flowers must be fed with sap from the root, and must be surrounded by the leaves which belong to their kind. Every great work of art is part of a whole, and by carefully considering it we see that every line of its beauty grows directly out of something sweet and rich in human nature. It is like the wondrous sea-shells which reach us from Southern seas,

which have been formed fold on fold by the healthy and vigorous life of the shell-fish which dwelt in them.

The comparison between a cathedral and a great sea-shell from the Mexican Sea is one which has often occurred to me, and which bears much dwelling on. They are alike in the symmetry of their forms, in the rhythm with which their lines rise and fall, in the way in which decoration follows use, and yet far transcends it.

But a difficulty occurs at once. The cathedral was worked out by an architect according to a careful plan. He knew what he was doing, and strove for the glory of God, and to delight the eyes of men; whereas the mollusk planned nothing, thought of nothing, only existed: and the beauty of his shell is a thing of which he could have no notion. This is a blot on the comparison, yet not so deep a blot as at first one might imagine. In all great works of art the unconscious plays a great part. It is not wholly, or even mainly, by thought that a great temple or church is built. The architects of our cathedrals did not work out a scheme in purely rational ways. The main ideas were there already; they belonged to the age. In each new cathedral there was but a margin of choice in every direction. In the course of a century the style of building would undergo some change; but from decade to decade but little. The idea of the cathedral was generic, rooted in the heart of the nation, and the architect had but to embody it with such variety as his individual tastes suggested; but not with any change of thought or design. His was the hand which drew the plan, but the head whence

it really came and the heart which made it possible were not his, but belonged to the Church and the nation.

It will be instructive for us, at the point we have reached in history, to note some further important facts. The beauty of a cathedral, and the splendid harmonies of its design, are an incontrovertible proof of excellence, moral and spiritual, in the race which produced it. But if we would know what particular kind of merit is thus proved, we must not merely make assumptions, but examine carefully the records of history. Few things are more beautiful than a sea-shell; but the creature by which it is produced is by no means high in the scale of living creatures. Its life is narrow and monotonous, its organization simple and primitive. In the same way, a high level in some particular art—architecture, or sculpture, or painting—may go with very bad social arrangements, with a very moderate level of intelligence, and even with a general prevalence of conspicuous vices. We must beware of taking a narrow view of the work of God in humanity. There are many sides to human beauty and goodness, and no age has shown excellence on all sides at once. It is for us to cull and to enjoy what is best in the life and the works of each age. But we must not fancy that it is necessarily our duty to imitate the particular forms of life and art which gave beauty to past times. To us too is imparted some share in the divine spirit which is ever working in the world; but the excellence suited to our times may be very different from that which we have learned to admire in the vistas of the past.

I have not been following any path of digression, but only climbing over a little hill which lay in our direct course; for the problem of the thirteenth century is not a mere historic question, but one having close relations to all of us to-day. The mass of Englishmen, as I have already observed, look back on the great age of realized Christianity as on a time of mere darkness. On the other hand, there is a tendency which attracts many of our best men, and which seems to be slowly gathering force, to turn away from all the superficialities and vulgarities of modern life towards the splendour of a past day, in which the rule of a materialized Christianity was supreme, and swayed public and private life with equal force.

Of this tendency there are many indications. The daily growing appreciation of the cathedral is one; another is the rapid spread of the study of the great poet who embodies more than any voice of the past the spirit of the Middle Ages. It is astonishing how, in the last half century, the appreciation of Dante has grown among cultivated people. Formerly, only a student here and there sometimes read his pages; at present his writings are an important element in the spiritual life of thousands. And I must pause for a moment to note one very suggestive fact. We often hear that criticism of the Biblical literature is a merely destructive force, bringing down the sacred writings to a vulgar everyday level. But we may see in the case of the *Divine Comedy* how criticism sometimes acts in precisely the opposite way. It is the critics who have placed Dante on the pedestal on which he now stands. In fact, criticism is a force which is dangerous to what

is second-rate, but not to what is really best. Did the fame of Shakespeare ever stand so high as to-day, after a century of the most searching and unsparing criticism? <sup>1</sup> Do any doubts as to the authorship of the Iliad prevent it from standing now at the very head of all literature? No! wise criticism is like a fire which destroys the dross, but makes gold ever purer and brighter.

However, the importance of the mediæval problem is so great for us mainly because the natural tendency to appreciate mediæval Christianity ordinarily makes men drift in the direction of the Roman Church, or at all events towards the extreme High Church party. And this tendency, which on the whole is to be resisted, though it is often productive of good, can only be successfully combated if we learn really to appreciate what was excellent in the mediæval Church, while at the same time we are keenly alive to her shortcomings. Of both excellences and failures I have to speak in this place, however briefly and imperfectly.

## II

It is convenient to speak of the materialized Christianity of the Middle Ages as a Theocracy, though no doubt that term goes somewhat beyond the precise facts. There has never been in Europe a theocracy so complete as there has been among the Jews and the followers of Islam. But in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Catholic Church, which

<sup>1</sup> One of the ablest of recent critics of Shakespeare has placed him almost on a pedestal of infallibility (Bradley, *Lectures on Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1905).

centred in Rome, had an enormous and almost undisputed sway over all those parts of human life which had to do with belief, with thought, and with worship. And the first thing to observe in regard to this theocracy, is that it was based, as such a dominion must needs be, upon a general intellectual consent and homogeneity. No doubt the universities were full of various schools, and the schools lived on disputes, but the range of these disputes was limited. The general agreement was great, being based upon the undisputed right of the Church to settle all points of doctrine. In matters of civil right and of government the emperor and the kings held their own; but, if we except a few remote districts and a few exceptional currents of opinion, it may be said that whatever Rome chose to designate as heresy in matters of opinion and belief, was utterly condemned, and perished under the ban. The roads of thought, in all matters worth thinking about, were guarded by fences; and whoso leapt over the fences was cast out of the Christian commonwealth, and left as a prey to Satan.

The fixity of doctrine did not, of course, prevent considerable variety in religious philosophy and intellectual schemes of theology. While the bulk of the schoolmen and doctors adhered in the main to the Aristotelian philosophy, which had been reintroduced into Europe from the Saracens, others, such as the great Bonaventura, were more Platonic in basis; and, in fact, the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius had a wonderful influence all through the Middle Ages in keeping alive the torch of Platonism, and preventing the



complete ascendancy of purely theological views. But though mingled with fresh Platonic and Aristotelian elements, the leading ideas of the schoolmen were derived from the distinctive system of thought which had been gradually moulded by the writings of the Christian Fathers, more particularly the great Augustine, who adapted to the Western mind the thought of the great theologians of Alexandria.

Another fact which tended strongly to produce intellectual homogeneity in Europe was the universal use of the Latin language. It is a truth which is often impressed on us in modern times that language is the vital breath of a nationality. The Latin tongue had, throughout all Europe west of the Adriatic, become the vehicle of the laws and the ideas of Rome before it became the official language of the Church. When Latin had been adopted by the Western Church and adapted to her needs, it naturally became a common means of intercourse between educated men in all countries. And it furnished the key to a great literature extending from the days of Cicero and Virgil to those of Augustine and Jerome. We cannot wonder that the national tongues of the invading races seemed barbarous, and their attempts at poetry and history crude, compared with the polished language and the finished style of Rome. Even at the present day our boys gain their first notions of literature and history from Latin: in the same way the young nations of the North for a while received all their culture through Latin letters. The use of a common language throughout Christendom was, in fact, an enormous advantage; we in the twentieth century still

lack a common vehicle of thought and expression, and are disposed almost to envy the days when a book written in Latin could be read by every person in Europe whose opinion of it was worth anything at all.

But while the new races stood under the influences of the Latin tongue, it cannot be said that in the Middle Ages they allowed their thinking to be done by Italians. It has been well pointed out that through the period of scholasticism the greatest names belong to the races of the North:—‘From the eighth century onward the constructive intellect was as specifically Northern as the political and administrative was Italian. The questions and controversies that mark the end of the old world and the beginning of the new are grouped round the names of Baeda and Alcuin, Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus, Rabanus Maurus and John the Scot, Gottschalk and Hincmar of Rheims—men all sprung from the new stock. And their pre-eminence becomes even more evident in the high days of scholasticism. Anselm, though of Italian birth, was of Northern blood and culture; the same may be said of Peter the Lombard; and of Thomas Aquinas it is enough to say that he had in his veins the blood of the Norman and the Hohenstaufen. Roscelinus and Abelard were alike sons of Brittany.’<sup>1</sup> I need not further quote from the learned author of this catalogue. It is clear how much the religious thought of the Middle Ages owed to the thinkers of Northern blood, the men of Paris and Bologna, Oxford and Cologne. Nevertheless we may

<sup>1</sup> A. M. Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 113.

suggest that the consciousness of the new peoples was as yet but half awaked, and did not find its real note until the time of Descartes.

But though an intellectual basis was necessary for the Catholic teaching of the great age, yet of course in a society so little intellectual, so strongly emotional, so given over to materialism and the dominion of physical needs, the intellectual element in the organization of the Church could be but small. The two marked features of that Church were its splendid organization as a discipline, and its extreme materialism.

In theory, church government was very simple, and a near parallel to the contemporary government in states. As in the feudal state there was a system, every man owing allegiance to some lord, and he to a superior, until the apex was reached in the King, so in spiritual matters there was a hierarchy culminating in a Pope. As the civic government required from all loyalty and obedience under penalty of imprisonment or death, so the Church required submission in all matters of faith and morals under penalty of excommunication, and of punishment in the world to come. The system of confession and of penance brought every man directly under this spiritual discipline; and, strictly speaking, there was in these matters only one virtue possible to the layman, the virtue of obedience. The realm of conduct was mapped out by ecclesiastical authority, so that everyone could tell what his duty was; and if he strayed, all that remained was a duteous submission to discipline in the form of penance or pilgrimage.

By an all-covering organization ecclesiastical disci-

pline was brought to bear in every corner of Europe. But since human nature was necessarily restive under the curb, the Church had by degrees brought to high perfection a system of cult which swayed not only the minds but the senses and passions of the people, at every point of their lives from the cradle to the grave. All the important crises of that life were dominated by the sacraments of baptism, marriage, and the rest. And more especially the Communion had become an engine of enormous power to bind the daily life of all men with links of adamant to the ecclesiastical system. Every priest received at ordination the power miraculously to transform the bread and wine of the Sacrament into the very body and blood of Christ; body and blood which, passing into the frame of the receiver, implanted in him the seed of immortal life, and bound him to the Head of the Church by a physical bond. Thus the Church became the society where, in the phrase of Browning, 'God is made and eaten all day long.'

The same extreme materialism which in the thought of the mass of the people marked the Communion, spread to the other features of Christian cult. To the sacred images all kinds of strange virtues were attributed. They were credited, like the bread and wine of the Mass, with the power of working miracles. Instead of being helps to bear up the mind of the votary towards the sacred person whom they represented, they absorbed worship for themselves; and cities came to think that their safety depended upon the possession of this or that image, which would be borne in solemn procession when there was a pressing

need of rain, or when the event of a campaign abroad hung in doubt.

Even higher honour than that which attached to sacred images belonged to the relics of the saints, the traffic in which forms such a strange chapter in the commerce of the Middle Ages. Without the relics of some saint or martyr beneath the high altar no great church was complete. To secure relics, the most dishonest means were freely employed; for the materialism of the age was so profound that the soul of the saint in bliss seemed less worthy of consideration than his remains on earth: the latter had an inherent power of healing the sick, and throwing around the church where they lay a haze of miracle.

Nevertheless, beneath the thick crust of materialism there glowed the heat of Christian passion, which in many places blazed forth in splendid personalities or noble enthusiasms. Mr Symonds has declared that the two greatest figures of the age were St Francis and St Dominic; and in any case it cannot be denied that the two great orders to which their religious passion and genius gave birth had for a time a wonderful effect through the length and breadth of Christendom. They represented the one the heart, the other the brain of the Christian Church. No figure who has ever adorned the Christian Church since the days of the Apostles has been more lovable than St Francis. Of all the followers of Jesus he perhaps has been nearest to Him in some of his most striking traits, in the utter subordination of self to a divine calling, in sweetness and gentle love for all mankind, in willing acceptance of hardship and poverty, in overflowing

delight in all the beauty and charm of the visible world. For a short time the Franciscan Friars presented to the world the picture of a set of men who, through renouncement of all they had, and through a never-failing love of all humanity, even of humanity in its most loathsome forms, attained to a peace which was not of the world, and a blessedness which only God can bestow. Beside the Franciscans went the Dominicans, these not content with the life of poverty and of simple love to God and man, but men of thought and education, the preachers of the age, bent on thoroughly Christianizing the philosophy of the schools, and eager to make theological orthodoxy triumph in every Christian land.

Thus in the culminating period of the Middle Ages the Christian Church succeeded in establishing among men a wide and a deep dominion. And it is beyond question that at the root of her success lay a perverted appreciation and application of those same fundamental ideas which had earlier served to transform into the Christian image the piety of Judæa, the thought of Greece, the discipline of Rome. The subordination of nature to man and of man to God was not merely the accepted idea of the Middle Ages; but it was an idea which dominated more than ever the life and the organization of mankind. Before we reach the end of this lecture we shall see the reverse of the medal, and realize wherein the victory of the Church was fatally weak; but if one does not look beneath the surface, its triumph may well seem complete.



## III

If we turn from the success of the Roman organism, and its power over the masses of the people, to its dealings with the spirit of the Northern nations, we shall find a more chequered course, a mixture of success and of failure. The phrase 'Northern nations' is of course an exceedingly vague one. It is impossible here to enter into an ethnological discussion. At its broadest the term will include all peoples to the north of Alps and Pyrenees. Since the fall of Rome, the leading part among these peoples has been taken by races predominantly Teutonic in type, though mingled with other elements, Celtic, Slavonic, and mixed. But in religion the two spirits which have been the protagonists are the Roman and the Teuton. The most notable trait of the conquering Normans and Franks and Saxons was their splendid courage, and a manliness which commonly goes with courage. All the higher developments of morality grow from humble beginnings; indeed, all may be traced back, step by step, to the primitive instinct of self-preservation and the desire to perpetuate the race. On this basis the will of God slowly builds up a series of virtues. Out of mere courage, in the case of all barbarians who have potentialities in them, there arises some sort of chivalry, a code of manliness and honour, of truth to one's superiors and respect for the weak. Recent history has furnished us with ample proof of the value to a nation of a traditional spirit of chivalry, since it is by the working of such a spirit that Japan has accomplished the

remarkable military feats which have adorned her late annals.

The spirit of chivalry, which is still alive in Japan, is decadent among the nations of modern Europe. But we know that in mediæval times, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it was dominant in the West. Tennyson has enshrined its principles in deathless verse: 'To love one woman and to cleave to her, to worship her with years of noble deeds.' To forego, even in battle, a mean advantage; to protect the weak, and wage incessant war on cruelty: 'To honour his own word as if it were his God's.' To resent an insult, and still more an insult to friends or to any lady; to prefer at any moment death to a mere breath of dishonour. Such were ideally the principles of Teutonic knighthood in the Middle Ages; that the actuality fell far short of the ideal is, of course, what we might expect.

Of this chivalry we find scanty traces in the literature of the ancient world. To Greeks and Jews alike it was unknown. It is not to be found in any of the earlier teachings of Christianity. Like the Bushido of Japan, it seems to be a racial product: a gift of God to the chiefs and warriors of the races of Northern Europe. Essentially warlike and national, it could scarcely be very sympathetic towards a religion of brotherhood adapted to the whole human race. Yet the Church at the time of her greatest power, in the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, did succeed to some extent in impressing her own image even on the institutions of chivalry. Especially was this the case at the time of the Crusades. Again and

again was the knighthood of Europe stirred up and induced to leave possessions and ease, wife and family, and all that it held most dear, to defend against the Saracen invaders the sacred city of Jerusalem. If ever war was waged for an idea, it was then; and the idea was, according to the feeling of the time, thoroughly Christian. On the whole, in spite of the terrible loss of blood, Europe found truth in the promise of Jesus, 'Whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall find it.' The final result of the Crusades was a great moral stirring in Europe, and a rapid advance of civilization.

The spirit of self-renunciation, of following the will of God to the death, may prevail in the pursuit of war as in other pursuits. And probably nothing on the Continent, in our own days, so much contributes to the production of a manly and self-sacrificing spirit, a spirit of high discipline, as does the military service, which superficial observers set down as a cause of brutality, and a waster of the vital force of nations. Nor does there appear any impossibility in uniting the Christian with the martial spirit. Saint Louis (IX.) of France was the contemporary of Francis of Assisi. The Christian Church canonized them both as saints, and both left a long series of followers to follow in some degree in their steps. The work of killing others in war does not foster humane virtue; but the constant expectation of meeting death oneself is in many ways an admirable training, and quite in the line of Christian ethics.

Unfortunately, this adoption of war into the Christian fold was but temporary and partial. The Christian

soldier has never been a common phenomenon. Nor can it be said that the Church was on the whole successful in consecrating the specific virtues of the nations of the North. She was much disposed to treat them as the Roman Empire had treated their ancestors: as barbarians, useful as allies and mercenaries, but standing at a lower level than Italians. The high Teutonic virtues—respect for women, love of truth and fact, an idealism which will not easily be quenched, free intellectual outlook—were not such as were likely to be highly appreciated at Rome. And thus it was not until the age of the Reformation that the national spirit of the Northern peoples really had free course.

National spirit, indeed, has been, all through modern history, a rival of the Roman obedience: often a successful rival. All through the struggles between Church and state in mediæval times, and again notably in our own days, we find a contest between the crushing uniformity of Rome and the struggling ideas of national growth and character. The Roman Curia have often solaced themselves with the notion that in this contest the Church is the force of spirit, and the state merely physical power. But this is a false view. Nationality is as much a spiritual force as is Catholicism, and national development is as close to the will of God as the institutions of philanthropy or the rites of divine worship. When nationality and the national religion are on the same side they are an irresistible force. When they are opposed one to the other, the contest is long and severe, but in the end nationality is usually victorious; for a nation may change its form of Christianity, but it cannot change its character

and personality. If it is unfaithful to the trust committed to it, it ceases to be a nation and becomes a herd.

#### IV

Already, in the second lecture, I have called attention to a distinction in the manner of Christian baptism. I observed that some ideas and institutions were baptized into the spirit of Christ, and some into the name of Christ. As regards the developments spoken of in the last lecture, and still more as regards those just mentioned, this distinction holds but imperfectly. The adoption of Roman means for fortifying and organizing the Church can scarcely be said to be a baptism merely into the Christian *name*, since what was adopted was completely changed and turned to new purposes. On the other hand, it certainly cannot be called a baptism into the *spirit* of Christ, since there could scarcely be a greater contrast than that which exists between such processes as the formation of a creed and the organization of a visible Church and the pure spirituality of the Founder. A nearer phrase, though one liable to some misunderstanding, would be baptism into the earthly *body* of Christ. It seemed to result from experience that the spirit of the Founder could not be retained amid earthly surroundings unless an earthly body was given to it. If Christianity was to be adapted to the mass of men, not reserved for those only who were spiritual, it must be mingled with earth.

We may allow the historic necessity, even if at the same time we can scarcely help regretting it. But

there is eternal truth in the saying of St Paul, that they who sow to the flesh will reap corruption. In forming a body for Christianity, the disciples formed that which must necessarily be subject to many diseases, and which must in time decay and become corrupt. And when a body decays, the imprisoned spirit cannot, without much pain and deep affliction, be rid of it.

Thus the materialization of the Christian enthusiasm, however necessary, became a sore and heavy burden. By a fatal necessity, it became grosser and grosser as time went on, and hemmed in the spirit more and more. The earthward road had been taken, and it continued in an earthward direction.

We are justified by history in saying that the decay of the Catholic Church which followed close upon the time of her greatest splendour is an illustration of the working of this inevitable divine law. In spite of her devotion, her piety, her determination to subordinate the secular to the religious, the Church of the Middle Ages allowed herself to fall below the level of spirituality to which she might have attained. She saw that men were very materialist, and on this materialism she chose to work, instead of trying to subordinate it to the spirit. She could not resist the opportunity of carrying out her purposes, purposes in their origin noble, by trading on the weaknesses and follies of men. Thus she sowed to the flesh, and of the flesh she reaped corruption.

The foes which arose to discomfit her were those of which I shall in the next lecture speak: in the south of Europe a revival of the spirit of Greek thought



and civilization; in the north of Europe, the rise of a more spiritual faith.

Even in the days of the completest domination of organized Catholicism, the beginnings of both of these great movements were visible to those who had eyes to see. From time to time there arose in the schools of Europe men like Abélard, who had drunk too deep of the waters of a philosophy which was always essentially Greek, to fit themselves into the narrow grooves of Catholic orthodoxy. But yet it may be said that in the south of Europe, on the whole, to this day, the religion of the thirteenth century has remained the one working and conquering religion. The thought of Italy and Spain does not run easily into the moulds of reformed and spiritual faith; and the mass of the people in those countries has a deeper dye of materialism than the inhabitants of northern lands. In the north of Europe, on the other hand, it may fairly be said that the Catholicism of Rome had never really satisfied the hearts of the finer and more characteristic natures. The seeds of the Reformation were always present, and were constantly sending up shoots, to be cut down by the organized force of the hierarchy of Rome.

I have spoken of the great cathedrals of England and of Northern France. It is agreed by those who have the power to read in the lines of the architecture of a nation the ideas which it embodies, that we have here a spirit quite different from that of the Roman Church—a spirit of imagination and mysticism, of high aspiration and vague worship, altogether different from that encouraged by Rome. Where in Rome or

in Italy do we find anything to compare with Durham or Salisbury, Chartres or Amiens? It is an inspiring thought to recognize that our cathedrals belong after all to us and not to Rome, that the Roman Curia would never at any time have felt at home in them, but would have regarded them as infected with the barbarism of the Teutons.

The same spirit of mysticism, of toleration, of spirituality has been in all ages the heirloom of the best elements of the Teutonic races. Their kings have bowed the knee to dominant Rome, but they have never tolerated Papal usurpation. Even in matters of faith and morals, the German spirit has never consented to be tied by the rigid bonds of Catholic orthodoxy. Even the common people, rude and uninstructed as they have been, have yet been in some measure free from the religious materialism which has marked the peasantry of the south of Europe, and which the Roman Church has tolerated for the attainment of her own purposes.

Full of instruction, in this matter, is the reply of Charles the Great to the Pope Hadrian, when he received from him, for promulgation in the Frankish Church, the Nicene decrees of 787 sanctioning the worship of images. The great Frankish king entirely repudiated the authority alike of the Synod of Nicæa and of Hadrian. In his dominions, he declared, alike the worship and the destruction of images should be forbidden: images are indifferent in themselves, and neither worship is their due nor enmity; their presence or absence in a church has nothing to do with the essence of Christianity. Here indeed spoke the bold

and tolerant voice of the North ; but the time was not ripe, and for ages the Popes managed to dictate to the Teutonic nations.

The same outpouring of the spirit which led in the south of Europe to the great movement of the friars, Franciscan and Dominican, led in the Teutonic north to a parallel but a very different enthusiasm. Societies were formed, called by the general name of the Beghards when male, and the Beguines when female, which were devoted partly to works of charity, and partly to the cultivation of a more free and more inward religion. In many points these societies differed from the more orthodox communities of the Catholic Church. Women had a large share in them ; marriage was not strictly forbidden ; but especially thought was among them much freer than among the Regular Orders. In an age so little instructed it could not be but that liberty should often lead to license, license alike in thought and in life ; and after a while the dominant church made up her mind to persecute the Beghards and Beguines as heretics, until they were mostly absorbed in the Franciscan and Dominican orders, which they leavened with a new spirit of mysticism. It was a premature revolt of the Teutonic spirit, a bright cloud which preceded the dawn. But these enthusiasts left behind them works <sup>1</sup> which not merely kindled a fire in their own generation, but served as a beacon for future times. The books of Eckhart, the greatest of them, being formally

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from the works of the early German Mystics, in translation, are published by Mr Inge, under the title, *Light, Life, and Love* (Methuen, 1904).

condemned by the Roman Curia, were for the time lost to sight. But works of his school, such as the *Theologia Germanica*, which Luther valued next to the Bible and St Augustine, and the still better known *Imitatio Christi*, have always been considered as works most full of the Christian spirit, though certainly not of the spirit of Rome.

In England, besides the national cathedrals of which I have spoken, other signs of a rising national spirit were to be found in those who had the best right to speak for Christianity. The career of Roger Bacon, the Franciscan (born 1214), was typically English. He was among the first to give serious attention to the pursuits of natural science; and in the great turn of thought which has led to the position of science in the modern world, his share is almost as great as that of his more celebrated namesake, Lord Bacon. The life of Roger Bacon was a continued struggle against the spiritual authority of Rome: his books were condemned, and himself languished for many years in prison. But he, like Eckhart, kindled a fire destined never to be put out.

It was not, however, the struggle of thought and investigation to escape from the shackles of theology which most tended to bring about the revolt against Rome. There was in most countries a constant irritation kept up by the tyranny of Rome, and the occupation of benefices by Italian priests. But in itself this irritation might have gone on long without producing actual revolt. The real spring of that revolt was the revulsion of the free and idealizing spirit of the North against the extreme materialism which was

crushing Christianity. What was eventually intolerable to the northern spirit was the materialization of the sacraments, the sale of indulgences, the worship of images and relics, the whole series of links of the iron chain whereby not the thought only but the soul of the people was bound. It is notable that the great reformers did not, in the first instance, rebel against Rome; they revolted against visible abuses, and the raising of vast barriers between the soul and God. They appealed to Rome against what was wrong in Christianity; and only when Rome answered the appeal by anathema and fire did they throw off a spiritual loyalty which had become deeply engrained in every part of the Christian world.

An Englishman and a teacher at Oxford cannot help feeling a glow of satisfaction at knowing that perhaps the most powerful and original of all the workers for reform in the pre-Reformation age was an Englishman and an Oxford teacher, Wycliffe. If one reads any account of the life of this remarkable man,<sup>1</sup> one is astonished at the extent to which he anticipated the views of the reformers of a century later. In his opposition to the Papal claims, in his protest against the abuse of the monastic life, in his appeal to the Bible, in his spiritual view of the Sacraments, even in his positive doctrines, he saw beyond all other men the deep needs of the age and the future of spiritual religion. It is a marvel that Wycliffe did not perish at the stake, though his enemies secured the appropriate satisfaction of digging up and destroying his dead body. Wycliffe and his

<sup>1</sup> For example, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, by G. M. Trevelyan.

followers were persecuted as heretics, and the advent of reform was strangely delayed. But though the movement which thus sprang up did not make a great noise in the world, there can be no doubt that it worked strongly beneath the surface in preparing the minds of men for great changes.

Thus before the end of the fourteenth century, the beginnings of intellectual revival were appearing; and the decay, which so often follows close on full ripeness, was making way in the Roman system. At first all Christendom awaited in hope a peaceable reform of the Church. The Councils of Constance (1414-18) and of Basel (1431-43) were expected to effect this reform. But it is not thus that great changes take place in the world; a strong organization, like a strong body, resists disintegration, and can only be destroyed after fierce and long protracted struggles. The mere desire of reform needed to be reinforced by a stern and narrow passion.



## LECTURE IX

### THE REVIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY

#### I

I HAVE treated of the conquests of Christianity, of her self-adaptation to fresh surroundings, and her power to use those surroundings for her own purpose. But there is another feature in the history of Christianity of which I have said little, though it is prominent at all periods : this is the power which she has shown of constantly renewing her youth, reverting to the original type, and setting out afresh on a new career. The phrase 'reversion to type' is, of course, borrowed from biology. Species of animals and of plants under certain conditions, especially when they have fallen into an unhealthy and unnatural state, show a tendency to revert to an earlier phase, one more in accord with nature and with the original character of the species. As Christianity resembles a living plant or animal in its growth and in its power of absorbing what is without, so it resembles a living thing also in the power of reversion to type.

It would be possible to take many instances from the early and the mediæval history of the Church. But we will content ourselves with taking one instance, by far the most interesting and remarkable of all, which marks the transition from mediæval to modern history in Christianity at the time when the discovery of printing and the revival of classical literature and art made all things in Europe new.

The phrase, 'Revival of Christianity,' seems to me perhaps the least inadequate to describe the great religious movements of the sixteenth century, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation with all their consequences. This revival must in the last result be regarded as an example of that occasional outpouring of the spirit upon men, of which I spoke in the first lecture. In some periods of history the hand of God is far more clearly visible than at others; remarkable men arose when and where they were needed to accomplish a mighty work. But still, looking at the matter in a historic way, we see that the revival of Christianity rose not unnaturally out of the circumstances of the time, out of the conjunction of a Church full of abuses and corruption with new lights shining and new forces working in every direction. A singularly calm and impartial historian, Bishop Stubbs, has written of the combination of events whence the Reformation sprang, as follows: 'The change is a very wonderful, and, historically, a most important one. The accumulation at one point of time of so many various influences in one direction; the contemporaneous fruit-bearing of a quantity of growths that had been advancing with no mutual

acquaintance for ages; the co-operation in the same work of the mistakes and vices of Popes, the lusts, avarices, and ambitions of princes; the learning of one side and the ignorance of the other; the almost accidental appearance of some of the most powerful causes, occasions, and influences; the divorce, for instance, of Catharine of Aragon, or the pecuniary distresses of Leo X.; and the common tendency of these to the break-up of the Roman power;—the coincidence of all these things make a problem which philosophy cannot account for. We can but say with humility, "It was so, for the time was come."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps an irresponsible layman may venture beyond the limits assigned by the caution of the Bishop, and say that in this remarkable convergence of circumstances we may venture to trace a divine overruling. In the present lectures I cannot go into details of history; I can but try to set forth some of the more certain and widely acting causes which seem to have brought on the great crisis in Christianity.

The relations between the Renaissance in letters and the Reformation in religion are interesting. The two movements were certainly closely connected, but quite as closely in the way of opposition as of homogeneity. We saw in the fourth lecture how it was that Christianity failed to come in contact with what was the best fruit of ancient civilization, the literature and art of Athens at her great period. Christianity in the second century had contact with Greek religion in its decline, and the vigorous and enthusiastic cults of more or less Oriental type which invaded later Greece.

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Lectures on European History*, p. 66.

And Christianity did succeed, in a large measure, in taking to herself the results of the philosophy of Plato and his followers. But the beautiful flower of Greek literature and art remained strange to her; and as the centuries passed by, the Church became harder and less sympathetic, went further and further from the Greek ways of regarding nature and life, became fixed in a worldly unworldliness and a religion out of relation to the spirit of God working in the realm of nature and within the spirit of man.

Platonism, however, was always in some form or other accessible to the Church, more especially in the spurious writings which were accepted as the work of Dionysius the Areopagite, the convert and pupil of St Paul. Through these works and those of some of the Fathers, such as Clement and Augustine, thinking men always remained in touch with the great spiritual philosophy of Greece. Again and again at intervals, in such lives as those of Johannes Scotus and Abelard, we find a return to a loftier and more philosophic way of regarding God and man. But yet when in the fifteenth century the actual works of Plato and Plotinus began again to be read, we cannot wonder that there came as it were a new breath of life over the waters which had been made stagnant by rigid Catholicism. And with the Platonic philosophy there arose from the grave the other sides of Greek culture of which I have spoken, and a really human or humanist movement spread through Italy, and passed on northwards to France, England, and Germany.

It can scarcely surprise us that the first result was an extraordinary corruption of morals and spread of

license.<sup>1</sup> For humanism laid stress on the innocence of all natural enjoyments, the beauty of human nature and the world, the delight of self-development and self-realization; and it dwelt on these things, not as Greece itself had dwelt on them, as a part of the national religion, but in opposition to all that at the time passed as religion—the dreary yoke of asceticism, the heavy burden of an infallible Church. The choice seemed to be between man and God, and the new culture presented man in so pleasing an aspect, and the old religion presented God in an aspect so severe and morose, that it is no matter of wonder that the former was preferred even by Cardinal and Pope. One may fairly consider the Renaissance as in the first instance a revival of an unbaptized Paganism, accompanied in the enlightened classes by a practice of all the vices of Pagan society, unredeemed by its virtues and nobleness.

This, however, is but one aspect of the matter. The introduction to the splendid masterpieces of the literature of Greece and Rome had naturally caused a sudden and enormous expansion of intellectual power. The minds of scholars turned back to the great days of Greece and Rome as to a golden age, lying beyond the barbarous mediæval foreground; the society portrayed by Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos became real to them; they began to feel that other modes of life than their own not only were possible but had existed. Hence arose the historic spirit which had died away from Europe for a long array of centuries.

<sup>1</sup> One best realizes this if one reads that most striking work, *The Biography of Benvenuto Cellini*.

The Renaissance may fairly be said to have spread to Christianity when scholars began to exercise on the early documents of the religion, the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers, the faculties trained on the Greek and Roman classics, and when the vivification of ancient history spread from Plutarch to the Gospels and the *Acts*. A brilliant writer, in a recent sketch,<sup>1</sup> has selected three names as most conspicuous in this work. Lorenzo Valla, at Florence, turned back from the Vulgate text of the New Testament,—the Latin translation by Jerome, everywhere accepted as a final authority,—to the Greek text. John Colet, at Oxford, began to lecture upon the writings of St Paul in the spirit of a more critical age, and rejected the vast mass of lumber with which the schoolmen had overlaid them. The third name is that of the greatest of all the promoters of broader views of the New Testament, Erasmus of Rotterdam, whose Greek Testament, in spite of its critical imperfections, must be considered as the starting-point of a mighty movement.

These and other scholars floated on the crest of a great wave which bore men on to compare the Christianity of their own day with that of New Testament times, and to long to restore to the ossified Church something of the inspiration and of the simplicity which had marked its beginnings. And as the spirit of the Renaissance had strongly worked, not only among laymen, but even among the Catholic dignitaries, it might well seem that the ground was prepared for a gradual and peaceful reform of the

<sup>1</sup> Wernle, *Die Renaissance des Christentums*.



Catholic Church. But, alas! it is not thus that reforms take place in this world of ours. We at this distance of time may well regret that the light and reasonableness which belonged to the spirit of Erasmus and Melancthon and Colet did not avail to cleanse the Church of its abuses, and to initiate a gradual change to a broader and more modern spirit. But it is not in human nature to value highly such things as are bought cheaply ; for the real rebirth of Christianity a terrible price in misery and fire and blood had to be paid.

And the conflict was not by any means, as we in England are apt to think, caused by the mere resistance of darkness to light, of ecclesiastical abuses and usurpations to the spread of more Christian and more spiritual views. As in almost all the great crises of history, when ideas clash, good and evil, right and wrong were everywhere mingled, and ranged on both sides. If I try to disengage and to set out in a clear light what I consider to be the main tendencies of the time, I feel that I am attempting a hard task, and one in which complete success is almost impossible.

As the revival of Pagan literature and art, unaccompanied by the guiding and controlling forces of ancient religion and civic morality, had led to a dissolution of morals, and spread self-indulgence in Church and state, so the first attempts to revive primitive Christianity led to terrible disorganization and wild excesses. Of the early history of the Church as recorded in *Acts*, some of the most prominent features are religious equality, the reliance placed upon direct visions and revelations from heaven,

and the community of worldly possessions. It is no wonder that the attempt in the sixteenth century once more to realize these conditions produced in an ignorant populace, under the leadership of fanatical preachers, such painful convulsions as the peasants' war in Germany. In England, the loss of the sacred prestige which had belonged to abbeys and monasteries exposed them to the greed of a semi-barbarous aristocracy, who seized the lands left for sacred purposes, and confiscated and destroyed the works of religious art which had accumulated during the ages of faith. On every side society, which had been gradually built upon a basis of which Christianity was the uniting tie, seemed to be drifting towards dissolution. And, as always happens, the conservative forces of the world drew themselves together to resist the threatened destruction. They fought against the license which had grown out of the Renaissance, and afterwards against the liberty of thought and inquiry which had given rise to that license. And in the result the powers of conservatism were in great part victorious; they would have been completely victorious, and drowned the Reformation in a river of blood, but for the divine elements which it contained, and which saved it in some of the countries of Europe.

I have called the great Reformation a Christian reversion to type. But the phrase, though true, requires modification and explanation. A literal reversion, in the sixteenth century, to the conditions and the beliefs which prevailed in Judæa fifteen hundred years before was, of course, impossible. Not only political and social conditions were entirely

different, but the whole mental outlook was completely changed. Yet while the change had been so vast, the Reformers did not fully realize its greatness. The historic spirit, which tries to see in a white light the events of the past, and to realize them in their naked truth, can scarcely be said to have existed. So the Reformers conjured up, with the help of the documents which they possessed, an ideal past, which in some ways was correct, while in other respects they carried back to the origins of Christianity the beliefs and aspirations of their own time. They clearly perceived many of the abuses which flourished in the Roman Church. The sale of indulgences, the veneration of relics, the domination of Rome revolted their consciences; and it was, of course, very easy to see that there was nothing of all these to be traced in the first age of Christianity. But the Catholic Church had struck its roots so deep, had for so many centuries governed the feelings and the thoughts of mankind, that her influence was not at once to be shaken off.

We may adopt the excellent classification of the great leaders of the Reformation given by Dr Ehrhard.<sup>1</sup> The root of the Lutheran revival he calls religious subjectivity, which I should prefer to designate the rise of the Teutonic conscience and sense of the spiritual. The foundation of Zwingli's movement was theological criticism and philosophy: Zwingli was a humanist like Erasmus, but he had greater courage and more conviction than that eminent scholar. In Calvinism we see the religious impulse give birth to

<sup>1</sup> *Der Katholizismus*, p. 100.

a kind of theocracy, and dominate practical life. Of the three great leaders Calvin had the greatest immediate effect; but, on the other hand, his legacy to the Reformed Church contained more of the base elements which had to be sloughed away by time.

## II

In the seventh lecture I set forth the main features of the teaching and discipline of the Catholic Church in the Roman Empire. We found them to be: (1) the formation of the canon of Scripture; (2) the settlement of the creed; (3) the materialization of the sacraments; (4) the formation of the order of bishops; (5) the primacy of Rome; (6) monasticism. The reformers generally accepted the first two of these, and rejected the rest. It was the materialization of religion which first roused their passionate opposition; and then, when the authority of bishop and pope was brought in to crush their movement, they were obliged to revolt against the external authority of the Church and the monastic army by which it was supported.

It is noteworthy that the many difficulties which in our day surround the reformed churches spring from their rejection of the Catholic tenets not less than from what they retained of them. The Reformation, like every other great historic movement, had its weaker as well as its better side. All good things come from God, but they become mingled with human weakness and folly. It was, in particular, two ways of regarding Christianity, which the Reformers inherited from the Middle Ages and retained, which have had on subsequent ages a sad influence.

The first of these was an unhistoric and uncritical way of regarding the Bible. Driven to produce some authority which could be put in the balances against the authority of the visible Church, sternly arrayed against them, to what could men appeal but to Scripture, the recognized sacred books of the religion? And accepting these as an inspired and infallible authority, they accepted them as a whole. To the Reformers, Scripture was the direct word of God, and not, as it is to us, a series of books written at various times and under various conditions, and bearing very different degrees of inspiration and of value. They regarded the Old Testament as like the Gospels and Epistles in inspiration, and similar in teaching; whence, of course, the older documents had to be read as allegories, as types and symbols, as foreshadowings and prophecies of that which was later more fully revealed.

The greatest by far of all the troubles and dangers at present threatening the reformed churches arises from the fact that their founders made an inspired or infallible Bible the corner-stone of their systems. The growth of historic criticism, whatever be in the long run the gain that it will bring, is at this moment sapping the foundation on which these churches were built. Their case is like that of some of our great cathedrals which were set on a foundation which, to the builders, seemed quite sufficient, but which has not been able to resist the decomposing powers of the soil, so that now we have with great labour to dig down to the foundations, and underpin the structures with modern concrete.

The second of the great misfortunes of the Reformers

was that they often regarded Christianity as a body of opinions, rather than as a way of life. I call this their misfortune rather than their fault, because it was quite impossible, considering how continually after the first age the Christian Church had devoted itself to the formulation of doctrine, and made the acceptance of doctrine a condition of membership, that they should take any other course. If they had been able to look at the Bible in due perspective, they would have seen that from the earlier accounts of the life of the Founder preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, doctrine is almost absent. But they looked upon the Fourth Gospel as just as valuable historically as the other three; and they accepted the Pauline Epistles as of the same authority as the teaching of Jesus Himself. Taking the Bible as a whole, it was only possible to interpret it consistently by means of a formed scheme of doctrine. Hence the importance which the great leaders of the Reformation attached to the drawing up of confessions, and their refusal to join with any who would not accept their formulæ; hence the bitter quarrels of Lutherans and Calvinists; hence the burning of Servetus and the splitting up of the Church in England.

Out of the tumult of the wild and uncontrolled movements of fanatic enthusiasm, crashing against a hard and generally sceptical conservatism, there arose in the sixteenth century two great religious movements, each representing a form of the Christian inspiration, each suited to particular national and racial types, both necessary to the spiritual life of Europe. These were the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.

‘It takes a soul to move a body.’ And certainly the



party of religious reform in Europe would never have been able to resist the pressure of the splendidly organized Church of Rome, with all its allies among the rulers of Europe, unless it had built itself up on some spiritual principle. At first, in the history of the Reformation, one is certainly impressed by its dependence upon the political support of princes, especially the kings and queens of England and the dukes of Saxony. But this support would soon have failed had there not been a permanent spirit of life in the movement. This spirit of life came from the passionate acceptance by Luther and Calvin and their followers of the ideas of that early phase of Christianity which is best embodied for us in the writings of St Paul, and from that maintenance of the possible and actual communion between every human soul and the Father in Heaven, which was so clearly taught by St Paul's Master.

This great idea took form in the Protestant theology in the doctrine of salvation by faith. This doctrine was not only the basis of Luther's theology, but the basis of his whole character and being. His revolt against Rome was at bottom the result of spiritual experience, the assertion of spiritual fact. It rested as much on truth and reality in opposition to authority as did the revolt of Galileo against the Mosaic cosmogeny. The Church of the time ordered men, on penalty of everlasting punishment, to accept her teaching that the pardon of sin could be bought for money, that the bread and wine of the sacrament were part of the actual body and blood of Christ, that the life of the cloister was in all cases nobler than that of the family.

The reformers perceived that these teachings were false, not true, and they had the courage of their convictions in drawing the inference that the Church which maintained them, and its head the Pope, were not infallible. Many men had thought these things before. The greatness of Luther lay in his faith that the God who had shown him the truth ordered him to proclaim it to the world, and promised him eternal life as a reward.

### III

The Counter-Reformation came in to do a great work in the south of Europe, as well as in France and Germany; and in a short time completely to change the character of monasticism, of the Papal court, of the whole spirit of the Roman Church. At Rome itself it substituted rigour of morals for open licentiousness; in monasteries and nunneries it brought in a rigid rule in the place of loose living; it revived everywhere the beliefs which seemed to be dying. The Dominicans brought popular religious instruction within the reach of the masses. The Jesuits curbed the passions of princes and nobles, and carried the message of the Cross as far as China and Japan.

At the Council of Trent the creed and formularies of the Church underwent complete revision and further development. Many points which had remained doubtful were now decided. The Vulgate text of the Bible was declared the inspired book of the Church, and its interpretation by the Fathers acknowledged as authoritative; the doctrine of the Mass and the Sacraments was defined in an extreme sense; stress

was laid on the belief in Purgatory, and on the veneration of the saints and their relics. And measures were taken for inculcating these doctrines upon the people, and especially for educating children in the knowledge of them.

This council was, in fact, the reply of the Roman Church to the appeal of the reformers. And, as able recent writers have insisted,<sup>1</sup> the whole tendency of the movement was anti-Teutonic. There had been German popes, but the race came to an end. The lead was handed over to Italians and Spaniards. Hitherto, the Catholic Church had been indeed predominantly Italian, but she had yet combined within her fold all the main national tendencies of Europe. Henceforward Christianity was divided. The Catholic Church had, as a visible institution, disappeared. There remained the Roman Church representing the Christian spirit as working mainly in the countries which retained the Latin speech. Reformed Christianity had escaped from her control, and pursued a fresh course, still retaining the invisible headship of the exalted Christ and a continual communion with the Heavenly Father of mankind.

Both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation were marked by the defects of their qualities, of which we naturally hear much from their opponents. To an Englishman the horrors of the Inquisition, the materialism of the Mass and relic-worship, and the sophistries of the Jesuit ethics, make it very hard to do justice to the deep faith, the splendid self-surrender, the noble enthusiasm of the new orders of soldiers of the Cross.

<sup>1</sup> Ehrhard, *Der Katholizismus*, pp. 140, 161, etc.

And the people of Roman Catholic countries have had their hearts hardened against the leaders of the Reform by tales of their looseness in the matter of marriage, their desire of worldly possessions, their mental and moral aberrations from a pure Christian code, their tendency to quarrelling and to infinite subdivision. There is no good in the world which has not its shadow of evil, and there is no movement in religion which does not lead some of those who accept it into sin and shame.

Yet at bottom, both the movements were adaptations of the root principle of Christianity to a new age. Each was in principle a reversion to type. We have, in the first lecture, defined the germ of Christianity as a passionate self-devotion to the divine will as operative in the world. The reformers were filled with so complete a recognition of the divine will that the part of man in the work of redeeming the world seemed to them scarce worthy of being taken into account; man had but to wait, to trust, to accept an offered salvation. The Calvinists accepted as a basis of their religion the principles of election and predestination. The will of God was to them so majestic and overpowering that in comparison with it the will of man seemed but a mirage. They carried the principle 'Without Thee we are not able to please Thee' to the length of fanaticism. God was to be everything, and man nothing. No man could by any striving save himself; he could only be saved if it was written in the book of the divine preordination. He might be, by the same eternal decree, cast out from eternal life.

Modern thought, even among the descendants of the Puritans, has moved so far from this point of view that we do not easily do it justice. Yet history shows that a belief in predestination is a marvellous power in battling with the world. Most great men of action have believed in a directing Providence or destiny; it was the belief in predestination which was the secret of the wonderful success of the earliest disciples of Islam. Apart from the belief in predestination, which was so strong among the followers of Luther and Calvin, they would scarcely have been able to meet their foes in the battlefield.

The religion of the Jesuits, which was at the heart of the Counter-Reformation, though it took an opposite doctrinal line, was yet quite as much based on a sense of the intimate relations of the divine and human will. The human will they studied with utmost care, and endeavoured by continual exercise and chastisement to bring it into subordination to the divine purpose revealed in the world. They found the divine will, not as the Reformers did in the continued inspiration of the spirit of God, as imparted in Scripture and to the living preacher, but in a system, in a visible Church, and the power of its duly appointed ministers to be the channels of divine grace.

The two ways of conceiving divine revelation are the two ways embodied from the very beginnings of religion in the conflicting claims of prophet and of priest. The one way was suitable to the genius of the northern races—spiritual, introspective, making religion centre in the conscience, especially the conscience of the individual. The other way was suit-

able to the genius of the Latin races—more turned to what is without, more social, less self-reliant, and less mystic in temperament. In countries where the Teutonic and the Latin elements were fused, as in France and South Germany, both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation struck deep roots, and it was long before their destiny was worked out.

I have spoken of some of the troubles which have in Northern Europe followed the Reformation. There is no need that I should say much of the sinister results which have in Southern Europe followed the Counter-Reformation; they do not greatly concern us here. But no one who knows much about the prospects of Christianity in France, Spain, and Italy will be disposed to triumph over us of the Reformed Faith. There is now far more of religious life among the laity in England and America than in France and Italy. When France ejected the Huguenots she sent away her own best blood, a vast gain to England, Germany, and remoter countries, but an irreparable loss to herself. She lost exactly the element which would have tended to moderation at the time of the Revolution, and which would have preserved her from violent vicissitudes in following times. The mass of intelligent men both in France and Italy is now said to be not bitterly hostile to the Church, but indifferent to it, watching with a distant interest the feud between the organized religion and the violent secularists and agnostics. Whatever be our troubles in England, this indifference on the part of the laity is not among them, at least in anything like the same degree.



These racial and geographical facts suggest the real explanation of the history of the time. When once the classical Renaissance had set in, it led inevitably to great mental changes, to the growth and conquests of physical science, to the rise of the historic spirit, to the rapid spread of a secular commercial spirit through Europe. But these things came about in Southern countries outside the Christian Church and made their way in opposition to her. To this day the Church of Rome shows no little hostility to these developments. Among the Teutonic races of Northern Europe it has been otherwise. Science, both physical and historic, has always been making fresh terms with religion; every sort of material progress has come into some kind of alliance with it. There has been a constant give and take between religion on the one side, and the ideas and forces of physical and intellectual progress on the other.

The reason of this appears to be that at the Reformation the Teutonic spirit was for the first time really baptized into Christ. The Teutonic nations had for many years been Christian; they had cast away their own gods and accepted the yoke of the Roman Church. But the national spirit and qualities had never yet been amalgamated with the spirit of religion; they had lived in mental subjection to a system of polity and a scheme of belief framed without any consideration of their special tendencies.

But the Reformers introduced into the religion of the North the old Teutonic freedom, individuality, and mysticism. They claimed for every man the right of approach to God, not through any organized church,

not through a mediating priesthood, but directly. They taught that every man was, or might be, a channel of divine inspiration; that man had to seek his own salvation, and could not accept it from ecclesiastical authorities. They brought, not only the organized Christian community, but every worthy member of it into direct relations with the spirit of Christ in the Church.

In speaking thus of the Teutonic element as dominant in the Reformation, I have no notion of overlooking other important elements in the movement. Some of the earliest stirring took place among the Albigenes and the Waldenses of France. Huss and the Slavonians of Bohemia received the torch from Wycliffe. Even Calvin cannot fairly be claimed as belonging to the northern races; in fact, in his tendencies we may see a very different strain from the Teutonic. And in our own day some of the most extreme Protestant sects may be found in Wales and the Highlands of Scotland. Broad views are necessarily inaccurate views. When one speaks of Wales, for example, as a mountainous country, one does not mean to assert that it contains no plains. In the same way one does not deny Celtic, pre-Celtic, and other elements in the Reformation. But looking at the matter broadly, one sees that Saxony, Holland, England, Sweden are pre-eminently the lands of the Reformation, and that the whole movement is a phase of the eternal conflict between Rome and the Teutonic spirit. In all countries in which the Reformation had not a Teutonic backbone, it was eventually put down.

It was, indeed, a real and essential Christianity to which Luther and Calvin and Zwingli led back their contemporaries. At the heart of it was exactly that relation of the human will to the divine of which I spoke as the kernel of the religion of Jesus Himself. The pipes which had long been fed from cisterns were once more placed in connection with the divine and perennial spring; hence an infinite possibility of progress and development.

The particular form in which Christianity presented itself to the Reformers was, as I have already remarked, the Pauline. At many crises of the Church the teaching of St Paul, or of Paul as interpreted by Augustine, has arisen from the mists of the past to guide the leaders of Christianity. It is one of the great inexhaustible fountains of Christianity. In particular the Pauline idea of salvation, that idea on which I dwelt in detail in the fifth lecture, seems to be in close relations with the intimate recesses of the human heart, and to have an unlimited power of serving as a basis for religious structures. This was the corner-stone alike of Luther and of Calvin, and of the most powerful movements, such as Methodism, which have since arisen in the countries which accepted the Reformation. But, in spite of the vital force of the Pauline doctrine, it is one which lends itself in a marked degree to aberration; to the abuse of it is due much of the religious eccentricity and particularism which is so marked a feature of the religion of England and America. And it was not long after the first appearance of the Reformers when the reformed theology was overloaded with a mass of

religious metaphysics as elaborate and as distant from fact and reality as the theology of Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas. No doubt some such hard shell of theory was necessary to protect the reformed doctrine in the troubled days of the Inquisition and of religious wars. But the progress of science, both physical and historic, is as clear a call to us to revise the Protestant theology of our Fathers, as were the Roman abuses and oppression in the sixteenth century a call to a revolt of the Teutonic religious spirit.

We have come to the time when the Western Church, the Church which had acknowledged the sway of Rome, breaks up into branches. When the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation had spent the strength of their first impulse, Christianity in Europe settled down on fresh lines. The particular branch of the Church which most interests us is the Anglican, called in the Cambridge Bidding Prayer, 'the pure and reformed part of the Catholic Church established in this country.' The Anglican Church is an unique phenomenon, a very remarkable embodiment of the genius of a nation singularly careless of logic and consistency, but combining a profound conservatism with a great spirit of enterprise and initiative.

The Anglican Church belongs not wholly either to the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation. It was started by the Continental Reformation, but largely moulded by a reaction peculiar to this country, and not going anything like so far as the reaction at Rome. It includes, and has always included, in its fold, both men who accept most of the doctrine of Rome, only rejecting Roman supremacy, and men of strongly

Protestant or even Calvinistic tendency. It is not surprising that in stirring times there is a tendency in the case of the former class of men to break out towards Rome, like Newman and Manning; and, in the case of the latter class, to become Nonconformists like the followers of Wesley. But the great merit of the Anglican Church is to have been a practical and working system for three centuries and a half. During that time she has never stood in hopeless antagonism to science, to culture, to social reform, like the Church of Rome, nor has she allowed the endless particularism or the moral obliquities which have disgraced some of the reformed churches. At the present day, whatever her difficulties may be, they are perhaps less formidable than those which encompass other sections of the Church. On the whole, she has stood on the side of the divine will, and in the vast expansion of the British Empire she has helped to preserve its Christian character.

## LECTURE X

# CHRISTIANITY AND DEVELOPMENT

### I

OUR course thus far has been historic. We have taken up one by one the chief phases of church history, and submitted them to an examination, hasty indeed, but such as was possible within the scope of these lectures. I have tried to show how in each we may discern on the whole, in spite of degeneracy and corruption, something of the working of the spirit of Christianity, which in the first lecture I defined as a loving recognition of, and co-operation with, the will of God. We have seen how the spirit of Christ, working from a definite point, and in a visible society, met and grappled with the great civilizations of the ancient world, how it absorbed what was necessary for its growth out of Hellenism, out of the religion of the Jews, out of the Roman dominion. Christianity did not indeed, as we have seen, absorb the whole of those cultures: like a growing plant it took from without what was necessary to its life and vigour. Sometimes it came back again, after ages, as modern miners re-



examine the rejected slag left by miners of old time, to take up what earlier it had rejected. Sometimes the society could not make up its mind that modes of thought and action which were constant accompaniments of human history could really be fitted into the Christian framework, and so let them remain outside, either as rivals or as allies. And sometimes it took into the Church what was really utterly foreign to the spirit of Christ.

We can easily see that the stronger and more energetic the Christian spirit was, the more did it exercise the power of assimilation; only in ages of stagnation did it remain in contented proximity to that which was foreign to it. In the greater ages, especially the earliest period and the period of the Reformation, it exercised on all sides a strong assimilative energy.

I think it better, in so slight a sketch as the present, not to attempt to carry the history down beyond the sixteenth century. We should be coming too near to our own time; it would be very difficult to maintain a general and an impartial outlook; and questions properly historical would be mingled with the present-day questions, to which I hope to devote another course of these lectures. Since the days of Descartes and of Locke, we are under the empire of what may be called modern thought. And it is better, as a matter of method, to examine modern thought according to its provinces rather than in the order of history, or according to countries. I doubt indeed whether, even if I could claim a sufficient knowledge of modern church history to be able to take a bird's-eye view of

it, it is possible to produce, on the scale on which I have been working, an outline of it which would be really satisfactory. In a recently published work,<sup>1</sup> Professor Adams Brown, of New York, gives perhaps as good an account of the working in Christianity of modern European thought as can be accomplished in a moderate-sized volume.

I must, however, attempt to bring together the results thus far reached: and try to gain some more general view of a Christianity thus stretching through the ages, and forming a bridge to connect the old world with the new, as well as man with God. Can we trace in the long history of Christianity the golden thread of an abiding purpose? Can we be sure that it is after all one religion amid all its varied surroundings?

In some minds the question may have been dwelling, whether, if the growth of Christianity was of the nature which I have outlined, it is right to speak of Christianity as a definite religion? In many ways the Christians of later times have acted on quite different lines from Christians of earlier times; they have changed their habits of thought, their methods of organization, their way of regarding their own institutions. Are we not rather tracing the history of European religion, than the history of Christianity? May there not have arisen with time a new body in the old garments, a new spirit in the old body?

In some branches of the Church this may have taken place; but, on the whole, we have more of the opposite process. The garments have been repeatedly renewed: even the body part by part has, at least in

<sup>1</sup> *The Essence of Christianity*, 1904.

the reformed sections of the Church, been changed. It is the spirit which persists. Christianity is not a system but a life; and the further one penetrates through the outward shows, the nearer one comes to the real motive power. The question of the identity of Christianity amid all the changes is much like the question of the identity of a nation or a person at various stages of their lives. The nation changes its ways; emigrants go forth from it, and fresh blood pours in from outside; but so long as the language, the institutions, the national spirit survive, so long it is the same nation. The individual changes in the course of years every particle of his body; he passes through many phases of education and culture, he marries and founds a family; yet he remains the same personality. So the Church in which the Gospels remain the textbooks of the higher life, to which the Lord's Prayer is a reality, and in which the spirit of Christ still works, is a Christian Church in spite of all changes.

Our remaining task, then, must be to gain some notion of the continuity of Christian history, of its law of progress and development. On this subject the views of Christian writers differ greatly. And these views are far more often held in the form of underlying assumptions than of expressed hypotheses; it is often not easy to extract them. And it is likely that some of these writers, if they saw their real underlying hypotheses expressed in definite words, would indignantly repudiate them, so liable are we all to take for granted what comes into our minds through inheritance and education, however ill it may agree with what we have learned in later times of life.

First there is what may be called the ordinary Roman Catholic view, which has very largely prevailed in the past history of the Church, and still holds its ground. This view does away with the sharp contrast between the history of the Founder and His apostles and the history of the society; or at least conceals it, by claiming for the authorities of the Church power to interpret the New Testament, containing the beginnings of church history, in an ecclesiastical manner—that is, not according to the ordinary principles of the interpretation of historical documents, but in a special way. The Gospels, it is maintained, must be read in the light of the subsequent history of the Church, and the Church must have the right so to stretch and adapt the Gospels as to fit them for the part she wishes them to play in the devotions of the clergy and the people. As in ecclesiastical art, so in ecclesiastical history, the Master and His disciples must never appear save with the nimbus; they must never be brought down to the level of daily life. All the reported deeds of the Founder must be made to fit in with the Church's idea of Him; all His sayings must be so interpreted as not to come into conflict with Catholic doctrine.

It was a true instinct which made the Roman Curia in the sixteenth century maintain that if the laity were allowed full access to Scripture, and permitted to interpret it as best they could, the beliefs which then swayed Christendom would be imperilled. And yet for a long time after the Reformation the full justification of that fear was not manifest. None of us ever knows how far he is under the dominion of preconceived views; how hard it is to see anything in another

light than that which one has inherited from one's parents, or learned from teachers whom one respects. The Reformers rejected many of the abuses which had crept into the Western Church. Against Papal power and ecclesiastical pretensions they obstinately revolted; but instead of looking at Scripture in a simpler and more historic fashion, the great leaders of the Revolt attributed to Scripture an even higher authority than before, and put its sacredness in the place of the idols which they had shattered. They of course in some degree reinterpreted various passages; but they were very far from taking a generally critical attitude: that has come upon us by slow degrees in the course of three centuries.

It was not against the creeds of the early Church that the Reformers revolted, but against the abuses of the contemporary Church. They continued to read the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul in a non-natural way. But in dealing with the subsequent history of the Church, they proceeded with much freer hand. Holding that the original doctrine of Christianity had become by degrees corrupted, first by Pagan ideas, and then by Roman usurpation, they came to look on the whole history of Christianity as a melancholy course of corruption and degradation. The nearer one approached the source, the purer flowed the stream. First the Founder and His apostles set forth a sublime and heavenly doctrine; then the spirit of the Founder in the Church for a time kept it on a higher level. But by degrees the corruptions of the world, the flesh and the devil, dragged down the Christian society until its light was all but quenched under the

darkness of the Middle Ages, and its inspiration smothered by the corruptions of an unspiritual hierarchy.

The various reformed churches took the type which they preferred to regard as ideal at various points of the early development of the society. The Anglican Church took as its model the Church of the early Fathers ; Baptists and Independents tried to go back to the first century. At the present moment there is in England a movement which proposes to take, on no clear ground but that of custom, the Church of the first six centuries as authoritative in regard to Christian ritual and usage, if not in regard to Christian doctrine. No satisfactory reason, however, can be given why the year A.D. 600, which falls into a specially dark period of history, should be regarded as the zenith of church development.

## II

I suppose it is unnecessary that I should criticize either of the above views at length. It is not likely that any of those whom I am addressing will be standing at the conservative Roman point of view. And the conservative Protestant point of view may fairly be considered as out of date, though no doubt still retained by many. It is, in fact, not to be reconciled with some of the most strongly pronounced intellectual tendencies of our day, tendencies which occupy the minds not only of students in our universities, but of the writers for newspapers and magazines, and of their readers. One of these tendencies is the rise of the historic spirit, another is the



spread of theories of evolution, which are scarcely to be reconciled with a view which tells of little but decay and degradation. It is scarcely surprising that, in recent years, a good many of those who adhered to the Protestant view of Christian history have found it more satisfactory to give it up for the Roman view, especially as the latter has been modified by Cardinal Newman's theory of development.

If one reads the recently published book called *Roads to Rome*, in which recent converts to Romanism recount the thoughts which led them to change their faith, one remarks how great an effect has been wrought in many minds by Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*. This book I have recently studied afresh, and I recognize in it, with men of all schools, one of the greatest and most suggestive religious works of the last century, an attempt, partially successful and partially misleading, to guide the minds of men into a broader and more reasonable view of the Christian faith. When I wrote my *Exploratio Evangelica* I did not realize how closely I was following in the footsteps of Newman in my statement and exposition of the doctrine of ideas and their manifestation. I have now better appreciated this. And, as a penance for my dulness, I will here cite a few passages from Newman's great work, which express the essence of the views which I have tried in these lectures to inculcate, in language the perfection of which I should vainly try to imitate.

'When,' he writes,<sup>1</sup> 'some great enunciation, whether true or false about human nature, or present

<sup>1</sup> *Development of Christian Doctrine*, ch. i., sect. i., par. 4-7.

good, or government, or duty, or religion, is carried forward into the public throng of men, and draws attention, then it is not merely received passively in this or that form into many minds, but it becomes an active principle within them, leading them to an ever new contemplation of itself, to an application of it in various directions, and a propagation of it on every side.' 'At first men will not fully realize what it is that moves them, and will express and explain themselves inadequately.' 'After a while some definite teaching emerges; and as time proceeds, one view will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third; till the idea to which these various aspects belong will be to each mind separately what at first it was only to all together.' 'It will, in proportion to its native vigour and subtlety, introduce itself into the framework and details of social life, changing public opinion, and strengthening or undermining the foundations of established order. Thus in time it will have grown into an ethical code, or into a system of government, or into a theology, or into a ritual, according to its capabilities.' 'And so as regards existing opinions, principles, measures, and institutions of the community which it has invaded; it develops by establishing relations between itself and them; it employs itself in giving them a new meaning and direction, in creating what may be called a jurisdiction over them, in throwing off whatever in them it cannot assimilate. It grows when it incorporates, and its identity is found, not in isolation, but in continuity and sovereignty.' 'Whatever be the risk of corruption from intercourse with the world around, such a risk

must be encountered if a great idea is duly to be understood, and much more if it is to be fully exhibited. It is elicited and expanded by trial, and battles into perfection and supremacy'

It will be evident to those who have followed these lectures from the beginning, and still more to those acquainted with previous works of mine, how nearly my view of the penetration of history and the moulding of belief by the action of ideas corresponds to the fundamental theories of Newman. When one reads his admirable statements of the working power of ideas, of the varied intellectual forms in which they find expression, of their power to use and assimilate elements taken from the world around, it is not easy to compel oneself to pause and consider the deficiencies which are apparent on a closer analysis. In spite of deficiencies, the construction of Newman seems to me built upon permanent foundations, though he is mistaken in thinking that it is the only construction which those foundations will support. It is possible to go a long way with him, and yet altogether to decline to see with him the necessity of an infallible Church, or to find that infallibility concentrated in the Church of Rome. But when I come to the parting of the ways and take a path which leads in a very different direction from that of Newman, I do so with regret, and part from the master with all respect and deference.

In no censorious spirit, but with perfect plainness, I must show why one of the most highly gifted of the sons of Oxford failed in his magnificent endeavour to show that Roman Catholicism was the only legitimate representative on earth of the Christian faith, and not

irreconcilable with modern thought. If he missed his mark, the blame lies less on him than on his University, which had remained isolated from intellectual progress, careless and contemptuous of the changes going on in the world of thought.

Every work going, as does that of Newman, to the roots of religious thought, must be built upon certain historic and psychologic views. I will speak first of Newman's historic theories; and second, of his psychologic and philosophic assumptions.

The attempt to apply an evolutionary hypothesis to the history of the Christian Church was not only a great conception, but one which bears the mark of genius. We must remember that when the *Development of Christian Doctrine* appeared, Darwin's *Origin of Species* had not been written. Theories of development were emerging from the high level of thought, as we may imagine the mountains appearing one by one when the flood of Noah subsided. Newman was the dove who returned with the olive-leaf. It is, therefore, only natural that his theory, being a work of genius but not superhuman, should have some of the faults of immaturity.

(1) In the first place, while he regards the life of the Christian Church as an evolution under divine control, it scarcely seems to occur to him that the history of other religions must be regarded in the same light. He speaks of the religion of the Pagan world as made up of 'malignant and incurable superstitions'; and it does not occur to him that there may be in them also a portion of divine light, that they too may incorporate beliefs revealed from above and gradually

made clear to men. In a recent excellent work,<sup>1</sup> Dr E. Caird has traced the gradual raising and purifying of the idea of God among the great thinkers of Greece. And it may be truly said that not only was this process as true an example of development, and of divinely-led development, as the development of theology in the Christian Church, but even that the Christian Church inherited from Greece a great part of its theology. The pre-Christian history of Christian doctrine is, as has been amply shown by such writers as Hatch and Lightfoot, of the utmost importance to its understanding. But to Newman, whatever is outside the Christian society is falsehood and superstition.

In places, no doubt, he shows a wider tolerance. He is willing to allow that the divine grace may shine upon devout souls, even among Pagans; and in one place he writes in regard to the religion of Mohammed, 'No one would deny that there has been a living idea somewhere in a religion which has been so strong, so wide, so lasting a bond of union in the history of the world.'<sup>2</sup> But the toleration which sometimes includes Islam, excludes all forms of Christianity which do not belong to the Roman stem. To heresy not even so much of sympathy is extended. All this, of course, shows in how small a degree Newman had assimilated the idea of the divine control of history. A belief in the constant intercourse between God and man was excluded from his mind by the profound scepticism which was, after all, one of his leading characteristics.

(2) In the second place, sound historic criticism of

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers.*

<sup>2</sup> Ch. v., sect. iii., par. 2.

the Bible was by Newman unknown or disregarded. In his time it had a more anti-Christian aspect than it has at present. We must remember that Baur's work on the Gnostics and Strauss's *Leben Jesu* appeared in 1835, at the time when Newman's views were crystallizing. But however the fact may be explained, it is the fact that Newman's notions in regard to the Old and New Testament are altogether pre-critical. He holds unmodified the old views as to Jewish prophecy. Of progressive revelation in the Jewish theocracy he has as little notion as of development in Pagan religion. To him the Gospel of John is as much an accurate historic record as is that of Mark. To him the profound differences of outlook between the Judaizers and St Paul are as nothing. All the words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles are taken as authoritative, in spite of the vigorous disclaimers of their author. *Scripture* stands together, not as a literature spread over many centuries, and written by men of many types and many kinds of belief, but as a formal revelation of God. And this revelation was to be interpreted by the Church as its authorized exponent, not according to the methods of historic criticism, but in allegoric and mystical fashion. 'Mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand or fall together.'

(3) Living in narrow High Church surroundings, it is no wonder that Newman failed to understand the true meaning of the Reformation. Luther and Calvin stood in his opinion in the same position as Marcion and Sabellius, as heresiarchs, men who had dared to differ from the views of the organized Church, and so were cut off from the source of all goodness. Whether



they embodied one side of the truth, what relation they bore to the genius of the Northern nations, whether the corruptions against which they protested were real—none of these questions seemed to have disturbed Newman. To him the saying *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, has reference not only to the judgment of souls; he applies it to spiritual life in the present world also.

No chapters in the *Development of Christian Doctrine* are more striking than those which dwell upon the victory of the Church over rival doctrines, of the splendid march through the ages of the Society of Christians. The writer seems ready to break into a song of triumph like that of Deborah, or of Miriam by the Red Sea. Victory he regards as proving the right to live and to conquer; every triumph of the Church in antiquity and in the Middle Ages is a proof of her right to claim authority in the present. No doubt in such an attitude there is much which appeals to an age accustomed to regard successful varieties of animals and of plants as justified by success. It has a certain biological satisfactoriness. But it is an inversion of the order of things to suppose that the teaching of the Roman Church is justified because it has been victorious over heresy in the past,—that it is victorious because it is true; it would be more correct to say that the doctrine of the Roman Church is simply the teaching which is accepted as true because it has been victorious. Of course, it is possible to add that the victory could not have been won without divine approval; but in that case, the vast success in the world of the teaching of the leaders of the Reformation must also prove the divine approval of

their work. If Islam could not have prevailed without some power of a divine idea, then certainly the Church of England, the Lutheran Church, the Church of Wesley may claim a like divine favour.

### III

Compared with the narrowness of his views as to the history of religion, the imperfections of Newman's psychological theories may seem small. But they are, in fact, of fundamental importance; for it is they alone which make such historic views possible. Although much of what he writes in regard to ideas is admirable, yet occasional phrases seem to show want of clearness as to their real nature. He speaks of them sometimes as *objects*, whereas what they really are is *tendencies*, power working not from without but from within the human consciousness. He calls them, as we have seen, enunciations or statements, whereas they are impulses of the active nature; which may, indeed, take form in phrases, yet cannot be comprehended in any. To Newman a doctrine is a statement about spiritual things which a man receives on authority, and to which he can justify his adhesion. This is far indeed from the view which I have advocated, that doctrines are an expression, a temporary and provisional expression, in words, of some experience of the inner life. To accept a statement without understanding its meaning and feeling its applicability, is valueless: to have the experience is a thousand-fold a better thing than to be able to express it in suitable and logical phrases.

The thing which Newman most bitterly disliked was what he called rationalism. Yet if rationalism be, as indeed it must be held to be, an over-valuing of the logical faculties of man in comparison with his powers of feeling and of action, then the system of Newman himself may fairly be condemned as rationalist. It puts correct thought before right action; it summons the intelligences of man not merely to guide the emotions, but to drive them, or even to arouse them. It has, in fact, a share in the old Socratic paradox that if men know what is right they are sure to do it;—that faulty thinking is at the roots of all anti-social action.

It is true that many pages of the *Development* are quite free from this tendency; and the writer often speaks as if religion developed from within instead of crystallizing outside the individual and the society; but he cannot remain consistently at that level. And a consciousness of this seems to be betrayed when in one passage<sup>1</sup> he tries eagerly to defend himself against the charge of rationalism.

But the greatest defect of his whole teaching as to the development of doctrine lies in this, that Newman does not fully realize that the growth of Christianity was not logical but biological. It did not progress and conquer through a gradual unfolding of beliefs implicitly contained in the Synoptic or Apostolic teaching, but by conquest and assimilation of that which was without. It is true that it would be easy to find in Newman splendid passages in which the conquest and absorption of suitable elements in the heathen world

<sup>1</sup> Ch. v., sect. iv., par. 2.

are dwelt upon;<sup>1</sup> yet his argument obliges him to maintain that what is explicit in later Christianity was implicit in its earlier teaching, that the Church has in its doctrine advanced steadily in one direction, that its start involved its consummation. The instances in which he tries to establish this continuity are very remarkable, and obviously drive him to special pleading. Infant baptism, the veneration of the Virgin, the supremacy of the Pope, are surely things of which there is not the smallest trace in the New Testament; and it is easy to imagine with what surprise, and with what indignant hostility, they would have been heard of by James or Paul. But the mind of Newman, which was curiously like that of Gladstone, by a subtle process persuaded itself that views in obvious opposition to historic fact could be maintained.

In these lectures it is maintained, on the other hand, that Christianity grew and expanded very largely by accepting what was in no way involved in its earlier teaching, in accepting and baptizing the results of the working of divine ideas in other fields than those of Judaism and Christianity. What Christianity added was the baptism, the spiritual assimilation and consecration whereby she translated those results to another sphere, not merely of knowledge, but of feeling and action. But in the course of such assimilation and translation the Church certainly often made mistakes for which she suffered, and sometimes by suffering escaped from them; but in other cases the consequences of the mistakes remain to our days as blots on her fair fame.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the beginning and the end of chap. viii.

## IV

A great part of the book on Development is taken up with an inquiry how developments of Christian ideas may be distinguished from corruptions of those ideas. The object, of course, is to prove that the Church of Rome stands in the line of genuine Christian progress, and that she cannot be accused of corruption. The tests are these:—‘There can be no corruption if it retains one and the same type, the same principles, the same organization; if its beginnings anticipate its subsequent phases, and its later phenomena protect and subserve its earlier; if it has a power of assimilation and revival, and a vigorous action from first to last.’ Such is the text of which the greater part of Newman’s book is an exposition.

A recent editor of Newman, M. Henri Brémond, has observed that we must never forget, in reading these applications, that Newman directs them all against the High Church position in the Anglican Church, and that to other Reformed Christians they will often seem to miss the mark. It is, indeed, easy to see that when Newman speaks of development in the Church he does not include the whole history of it, but begins with the Church when it was already organized and had acquired a definitely episcopal and ecclesiastical character. His ignorance of modern criticism did not allow him to observe that he does not compare the tree with the seed, but only with the sapling; and that it is easy for the mass of readers in England to escape the force of his arguments by going round the farther end of his line of development.

This being the case, it does not seem necessary to consider in any detail the latter part of the book. I will only observe that the tests spoken of by Newman are mainly intellectual, and have more to do with outward and visible consistency in organization and doctrine than with continuity of spirit. I will only recall what the Founder of Christianity said when He was forewarning His disciples as to the future, and telling them how they might discern between true and false continuers of His teaching. The same problem was presented to Him as to Newman. But instead of prescribing some of the tests on which Newman so skilfully insists, He set forth but one rough and practical test: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' Immeasurably nearer to the heart and reality of things is this simple utterance than is the elaborate construction of Newman. Here we have a test which is quite scientific. And, whatever the intellectuals may say, it is the one test which to the end of time the mass of mankind will insist on applying. Every system of religion, every branch of the Church of Christ, is every day being subjected to this test, the test of living, and rising or falling according to the result of living.

I do not deny that it is part of the duty of men of thought to seek in the intellectual sphere the causes which make one form of the Church in the highest sense successful, and another stagnant or retrograde. Religious thought and philosophy are always necessary. But I do fearlessly maintain that mere consistency of organization and teaching in a Church which lives



through ages of very different tendencies and characters is no great virtue, and has a closer kinship to petrification than to life. The Church which will dominate the future is likely to do so less because she has a consistent history than because she knows how to inspire men of the present, and to draw them to a higher level of conduct. The test of fruits must ever be the final test.

## V

It is with regret that I am obliged to criticize one whom I so greatly admire as Newman. But in these matters we must be no respecters of persons, but speak freely according to the light that is in us. And if the writings of Newman are at this moment a power to draw men into the Roman Church, they must be criticized not as the words of a departed classic, but as the appeals of one who is in a sense still living among us.

But if Newman still appeals with the force of genius and conviction to large classes of readers, it is certain that more thoughtful and better educated moderns will be more attracted by the views of the Roman Catholic writers who of late have built on the foundations of Newman, but have corrected his failures in criticism, and who present to Christian readers the enticing gift of a new Romanism, professedly in harmony with modern thought. It is by no means in a spirit of controversy that I approach these writers. With many of their views I have the strongest sympathy, and, in fact, I would move on lines parallel to theirs. It is only the exclusive claims

put forward by the authorities of the Vatican, denying the right of existence to all outside their organization, which we are bound to meet with unbending rigour.

Many of us have followed with deep interest the career of the most brilliant writer of what may be called the Neo-Catholic school of France, M. Alfred Loisy. Certainly the reproach of being backward in matters of Biblical criticism which I brought against Newman, does not apply to M. Loisy. Not only is he frankly critical in dealing with the Jewish Scriptures, but he handles the text of the New Testament with complete liberty, and is as bold in his historic views in regard even to the life and teaching of the Founder of Christianity as the most advanced theologians of the German universities. The Gospel of John is to him an elaborate allegory. He thinks that Jesus anticipated an almost immediate end of the world, a cataclysm in which He Himself should return to establish a kingdom of saints. He regards the historic origin of the Lord's Supper as a very doubtful matter.

This complete freedom of historic investigation is made possible for M. Loisy by the broad distinction which he draws between matters of history and matters of faith. Whatever enters into the course of history must be tested and measured by historic method, must be received or rejected according to the most rigid canons of historic probability. But doctrine, and whatever is matter of faith, must be accepted at the hands of the Church, and its legitimate head the Pope, as something imposed by authority and taken in humility. To take an extreme instance. The origin

of the Lord's Supper is, according to M. Loisy, surrounded by historic doubt: it is improbable that it was instituted by Jesus Himself before His departure. But the doctrine that when Mass is celebrated there is a transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, is to be accepted as a matter of faith by all loyal members of the Christian community on earth.<sup>1</sup>

Everyone who has thought much about such ultimate questions as the relations of history to faith, knows that in these matters one can always escape minor difficulties and inconsistencies by taking up a frankly extreme position. The complete dividing up of religious belief between the two spheres of history and doctrine, the dichotomy of all possible creeds, is one of those extreme measures which please by their logical thoroughness, but entail some other disadvantages. It may be compared to a very complicated and dangerous surgical operation, such as are occasionally resorted to as the only chance for life, but which leave the patient marred and incomplete to a short yet lingering existence.

It would be a tedious and unnecessary task to examine at length all the difficulties inherent in M. Loisy's scheme. I need but touch on two or three of them. In the first place, the Curia of the Roman Church will not allow that history is outside the province of faith. Her authorities have always demanded the teaching of religious history for teachers whom she herself controls. And in expressly con-

<sup>1</sup> I have stated my views as to M. Loisy's position more fully in the *Hibbert Journal*, October 1904, p. 126.

demning the historic views of M. Loisy, the Papal authorities have made it known to the world that they intend to continue this line of action in the future.

But we English will feel that there are objections to any such view as M. Loisy's which go deeper still. The conflict between scientific knowledge and religious faith is not one which can be adjusted by locking up the two apart in separate cells of the human brain, or building up between them an impossible wall. Science is necessary and faith is necessary; but they must in some way come to terms and manage to live together. It was the business of our fathers to reconcile the knowledge of nature with Christian belief; and now that the extreme friction between these two may be said to lie in the past, it is the business of the present generation to find out how the faith of the Church may be reconciled with the new views in matters of philosophy, psychology, and history which have become part of the mental furniture of the living generation. It must be a matter of give and take. The leaders in science must abate some of their claims to utmost wisdom, and learn their limitations; and religion must learn to adapt itself to new intellectual surroundings.

It is strange how deeply engrained in the minds of the liberal Romanists is the notion that there is something radically inconsistent between theories of development in religion and all forms of Protestantism. M. Loisy constantly affirms that there is no principle of progress in the reformed churches. 'Protestantism,' he says, 'implicitly affirms the sufficiency and absolute

immutability of the revelation of the Gospels.' And a man of wider outlook than M. Loisy, Mgr. Mignot, the liberal Archbishop of Albi, writes:<sup>1</sup> 'Protestants, not only those who are orthodox, but often also those who are most liberal, obstinately refuse to allow any sort of evolution of Christian dogma.' If there has been in the past any justification for statements like these, it is but a partial justification. Both the Archbishop and M. Loisy are Frenchmen, and have the French tendency to look at things in a strictly logical way. We English are dangerously near to the other extreme, and make but little account of logic so long as our affairs can go on in a practical way. Thus though an extreme belief in Biblical inspiration *ought* to unfit us for the appreciation of theories of evolution as applied to religion, yet as a matter of fact those theories have constantly made their way into, and transformed, our conceptions of the Church and church history. There are, of course, conservative schools of bibliolatry among us; but even with them the interpretation of Scripture has made progress. And theories of evolution in religion, if evolution be taken in a truer and broader sense, belong by origin to the people of the North, and at present are more rife in the reformed churches than in that of Rome. We have no ecclesiastical authority which has power to cut down those theories if they do not grow according to an approved pattern.

How little even liberal members of the Roman Church know about Protestantism appears in all their works. Another liberal Romanist, Signor A. Fogazzaro,

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Brémond's *Newman*, p. xi.

has written in a recent work :<sup>1</sup> 'Protestantism is being shattered upon the dead Christ, while Catholicism evolves by virtue of the living Christ.' No doubt Signor Fogazzaro never heard of Dr Dale's remarkable book, *The Living Christ*.

But while we reject the exclusive claims of Rome, whether her claims to be the sole dispenser of spiritual life and death, or her claims to a monopoly of the doctrine of development, we are quite ready to learn all that we can from the Roman Church in this matter or any other. The thing that we specially have to learn from her is to consider the growth of the Christian society as an organism, distinguished alike from the community of European nations, and from the individuals who compose the society. The history of the Church is not the history of Western civilization, though it be a great part of such history, nor is it the mere history of an intellectual development, but something apart from these.

A striking book published in Austria in recent years is Professor Ehrhard's *Katholizismus*. It is written with a view to checking the tendency prominent just now in South Germany to break away from Papal domination, the *los von Rom* movement, and it replies to the striking appeal written by Mr H. S. Chamberlain,<sup>2</sup> an Englishman settled in Germany, calling on the German peoples to unite in leading the modern movement in a direction opposite to that desired by the Roman Curia. Dr Ehrhard strongly

<sup>1</sup> *Il Santo* ; Eng. trans., p. 315. This work has been placed upon the Index.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Grundlagen des XIX<sup>ten</sup> Jahrhunderts*.



opposes the view, which has certainly been conspicuous not only in the works which he criticizes, but also in the present book, which regards Roman Catholicism as a system which has never done justice to the inspiration of the Teutonic and Northern nations and now lies right across the path of their future progress.

Dr Ehrhard is far more appreciative of the position and merits of the reformed churches than is Newman or the French liberal Romanists. He shows that at the Council of Trent the German element was almost entirely wanting, and that since it the peoples of South Europe have wholly governed and directed the Roman Church. And he allows that between the Teutonic nature and Protestantism there is a natural affinity. 'Protestantism,' he writes,<sup>1</sup> 'has preserved in itself enough of the essence of Christianity to be a vehicle of true religious life. It would indeed be incomprehensible how millions of Christians for near four centuries could adhere to it, if it had not satisfied their religious needs.' He also allows that as yet no philosophy has appeared which will prepare the reconciliation of modern thought to the spirit of Rome. Yet in spite of national leanings, and of something like hopelessness in his outlook, he still cleaves to the unity of the Church and the Papal Infallibility.

Nor is it difficult for a sympathetic reader to see why he prefers to suffer the evils inherent in the Roman Catholic position in Teutonic countries, rather than to secede. The nightmare terrors which drive back every thought of his which strays in the direction

<sup>1</sup> p. 126.

of reform, are two—individualism and subjectivism. He sees no end to the divisions and the disorganization which must follow the abandonment of a visible infallible Head. And he thinks that if the Church gives up her claim to possess objective and absolute truth, the Christian religion will melt away in a slough of personal and mutually contradictory views of religion and of God. On almost every page these words, individualism and subjectivism, are set up as warning notices to inform us beyond what point the ice begins to be too weak to bear our weight, and becomes a mere superficial coating covering a death-trap.

It is curious to note that a recent French writer, M. E. Demolins, seeking the cause of what he calls the 'Superiority of the Anglo-Saxons,' finds it in this very individuality, the personal initiative and the supremacy of the conscience, which go naturally with the reformed religion, and urges his own countrymen to cultivate exactly the qualities which seem to Dr Ehrhard to lead to utter destruction.

Surely in this case, as in most, truth and wisdom lie in the mean and not in either extreme. More communism in action and in thought seems natural to the Latin races; greater freedom and bolder initiative to the Teutonic peoples, and especially to the Saxon branch. It is certain that alike in politics, war, and religion the English, the Dutch, the Germans, the Scotch, the Scandinavians owe their success in a great degree to individualism. At the same time, it must be allowed that the excess of individualism, alike in politics, ethics, and religion, has produced

among the Northern nations sad aberrations. We cannot be surprised that there are many among us whom these aberrations have so strongly impressed that they revolt against the whole frame of mind from which they result.

No one who studies the signs of the times will doubt that the excess to which individualism, especially in England and America, has in some matters run, will bring about a great reaction in the direction of some form of socialism. We see the socialist leaven working on all sides of us, often in a very imperfect and illogical way. But here we are clearly coming to a new subject, and one far too great to be attacked at the end of this lecture. All that we have at present to note is that, supposing a modified socialism to be a need of the time, the Roman Church is certainly not the body to which reformers would look for the provision of such a remedy. It is far too closely tied by tradition, and far too little in sympathy with the practical needs of modern life, to be able to set about the reorganization of civil society. A saviour of society might well be accorded great powers by the despair of modern philanthropists, but that the Pope should be recognized as such a saviour of society would seem to all practical men an absurdity. And the same would apply to any ecclesiastical authority recognized at the present time.

Similarly, what Dr Ehrhard calls subjectivism is a strong and, on the whole, a healthy tendency, which may run into excess. He declares that it marks the whole course of modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant and his followers. In opposition to it he

places the new scholastic, a movement in the Roman Church based on the theology of the Middle Ages, and characterized by a return of the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, which an encyclical of Leo XIII. has imposed on all colleges under his rule. Most educated Englishmen will feel that to go back from Kant to Thomas Aquinas is just as possible as to revert from our heliocentric system of astronomy to that which makes the universe revolve around this world of ours, or to go back from chemistry to alchemy. Whether we are Kantians or not, we accept the 'subjective' outlook of Locke, of Kant, of Mill: and can no more look on the world in the 'objective' way of the old Aristotelian philosophy than we can reconstitute the Heptarchy. Dr Ehrhard adds, rather naïvely, 'Attempts hitherto made to incorporate in the Catholic Theology the true results of modern thought have all failed'; in much the same way, we may suppose, as attempts to mix oil and water have failed.

I do not wish to drop into a philosophic discussion, but I must observe in passing that the true remedy for excessive subjectivity in modern philosophy does not consist in harking back to the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, but in recognizing that objectivity alike in thought and in action is an element introduced by the will and not by the intellect. This is a view towards which recent philosophy has been tending.<sup>1</sup>

If one tries to make out, among the flowing periods of Dr Ehrhard, which among the tendencies of modern thought can be reconciled to Romanism and which are in hopeless opposition to it, one is

<sup>1</sup> This I have tried to enforce in *Exploratio Evangelica*, chaps. iii.-vi.

completely baffled. In page after page of eloquent commonplace the writer insists that it is only what is evil in modern life and thought which is inconsistent with *Katholizismus*; but he gives us no clue whatever to enable us to distinguish between bad and good. He moves with timid steps, and eyes constantly turned towards the Authority, which is likely to take offence at any more definite pronouncement.

Meantime we have the dicta of Authority itself, speaking in no undecided tones. We have the Syllabus of Pius IX., in which we can read for ourselves what the voice recognized by the whole Roman world as infallible thinks of modern culture and civilization. We have a formal statement that all the tendencies which mark the developing spirit of the modern world are of evil, that the causes for which our ancestors gave their lives are steps in opposition to the divine will. Here the Church of Rome has with all deliberation taken up a position, and announced that the war between it and the age is a war to the death. Can we doubt which side will be in the end victorious?

## VII

It would take me too far if I attempted here to deal with those members of the school of Newman who have written in English. I could not venture to dismiss them in a few minutes. But the more I read of their views the more impossible does their position appear: advocates of free thought and critical methods in a Church which is a rigidly organized despotism.

One by one they are condemned by an authority which they are not in a position to question, and reduced to silence. Surely, if the final verdict as to truth in belief rests with Rome, it is useless to spend one's strength and wear out one's heart in the search for it. It is like the labour of Sisyphus in Hades, or like that of the daughters of Danaus, who were ever drawing water to pour into a bottomless vessel. If I could persuade myself that responsibility for my beliefs was taken from my shoulders by the Church, I should not be eager to bear the burden myself: it is only because that responsibility is an essential part of my life and personality that I cannot put it off on to any authority on earth. To God alone am I prepared to answer for it.

Seven years ago I expressed the opinion that 'the new criticism of the Bible is a greater danger to the Protestant than to the Catholic schools of theology.'<sup>1</sup> It is not strange that such a view expressed by an Anglican writer should have been eagerly welcomed by some Roman theologians, and quoted in their organs. It was a natural view to take, and, from a strictly logical point of view, easily defensible. But, nevertheless, I have since found it to be untenable. The world is not regulated by logic, but by tendencies; and an examination of the religious tendencies now working shows how great is the improbability that the Roman Church will ever be reconciled to free historic and psychologic inquiry.

It is quite possible to defend on what may be called biological grounds many of the additions made

<sup>1</sup> *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 3.



by the Church to the earliest teaching. In fact, in these lectures I have often thus defended these additions. If bishops became necessary, there is nothing in the doctrine of the Founder to forbid them. The kernel has no cause of complaint against the hard rind which protects it. If sacraments were necessary as a vehicle for saving ideas, Christianity was justified even in borrowing the forms of the sacraments from rivals which she despised for their superstitions. Nay, even doctrines of which there is no trace in the New Testament, such as the doctrine of Purgatory, the adoration of the Virgin Mother, the veneration of saints, could very well be fitted to the stem of Christian teaching and interpreted in the spirit of the Founder. But there are other accretions of Christianity which, however they might be worked into the scheme of the visible Church, could never really receive Christian baptism, nor be tolerated by the spirit of Christ. Sacerdotalism, or the insertion of a priestly class between the soul of man and God, and materialism, or the valuing of the outward and visible more than the inward and spiritual—these are the very evils against which the Founder of Christianity revolted, and against which His spirit at all times wages incessant war. If the hardness of men's hearts has made these developments at times almost necessary to the preservation of the Church, yet in the war against them, the life of the Founder is always on our side.

Historic criticism, when pursued in a healthy and positive, not in a merely sceptical and destructive spirit, will not only call much in question, but will

also add greatly to the solidity of that which endures all the tests. The study of the Christian origins has now for a long while set in a somewhat conservative direction, so that, while we see all the weaknesses of the early Christian documents, we yet feel confident that we can recover from them the main teachings of the Founder of Christianity and His apostles. We have only to place this teaching side by side with history and doctrine as expounded in the authorized schools of the Roman Church to see what a glaring contrast exists between the two. It is, no doubt, possible to trace almost every step of the way between the first promulgation of Christianity and the formulæ of the Council of Trent; and the reason for every step may be in a measure recovered. But no human intelligence can possibly reconcile the views of God, of man, and of salvation contained in the Gospels and Epistles with those contained in the handbooks in use in Roman seminaries. Yet the Roman Church is compelled by the necessities of its position to hold to both these contradictory sets of views. I need not labour the matter, since an authority which is most intimately acquainted with the mind of the Roman Church, the Roman Curia itself, places the thorough-going work of historic criticism on the Index.

Quite recently we have had an example of the way in which Rome regards historic criticism in the extraordinary pronouncement of the Pope that the whole of the Pentateuch is the work of Moses, written by himself or an immediate disciple. This view is not held by any competent theologian or historian at the present time. Rome, therefore, claims by an *ipse*

*dixit* to decide questions of criticism and history in defiance of all argument and all reason. After this, of what use is it for liberal Romanists to try to maintain a double allegiance—on the one hand towards historic science, on the other hand towards Papal decrees? They will find themselves compelled to make a choice between the two.

Broadly regarded, the situation of the Roman Church at present nearly resembles that of its prototype the Roman Empire at some periods of its history. On the frontiers it is still strong; war keeps it healthy; and able leaders still repel the forces of invasion. But within, it is under stress. In France, Italy, and Spain it is tottering; and though an inherited discipline and the dread of anarchy may for a long time keep it together, its equilibrium is constantly becoming more unstable. Many people think that a reforming Pope might give it a new lease of life. But the course of evolution seldom makes a sudden turn in a fresh direction; and the direction in which the Roman Church has for three centuries moved is beyond mistake.

The defence of spiritual freedom against an oppressive tyranny, the maintenance of spiritual religion against materialism, the claim of the human spirit to a direct access to God—these are at bottom the realities for which in England our ancestors have for four centuries lived and died. If through despondency or pessimism we give up the defence of these things in order to sink into spiritual sloth, or for the sake of a precarious peace, then the glory of Teutonic liberty will depart, and the religion which Christ died to

bequeath to the world will become a 'fen of stagnant waters.'

Thus in spite of all their intellectual confusions and shortcomings, the Reformers were essentially right when they framed their appeal to Scripture against the abuses of the Church which had its centre in Rome. Further study, and the growth of a critical spirit, have enabled us to see what a mistake it is to attribute infallibility either to Scripture or to the voice of the Church. And further study has enabled us to trace with truer illumination and greater precision the ideal line of Christian progress, from which its actual or historic line often widely departs. When a traveller has wandered from the proper path, he may often by a bold push through rough country to right or to left recover it. This is in effect what the Reformers had to do in the case of Christianity, and what has to be done again in the present age.

The present lectures, which I here conclude, are an attempt to show that religion and culture may be reconciled, not by shutting them up into separate cells of the human consciousness, but by letting them freely penetrate one another so that each may discern and appreciate what is good in the other. Writers of the school of Newman say that Christianity met in the field and fairly vanquished ancient culture, and is able to do the same again in the case of modern culture. The view which I take is different. Christianity did indeed vanquish ancient culture; but she took out of it all that best suited her own nature. And because she rejected so much of it which she perhaps might have absorbed, she sank to the low level of mediæval-

ism. Her future now depends upon whether the Christian spirit can really come to terms with the spirit of science and of social progress. A mere victory over these would take us back to the Middle Ages; a mere defeat by them would be a collapse of Christianity, with which in the long run would disappear all the fruits earned by our fathers during centuries by self-devotion and religious passion.

But the kind of religion which can be reconciled with modern culture is certainly not Romanism as understood at Rome; nor is it sacerdotalism or sacramentalism in any form; it is a religion which cannot recognize any authority as infallible, whether a book, a church, or a Pope. Authority which a man loyally accepts and intelligently follows is the best guide in every field of thought and activity. In science as in art, in politics as in religion, it checks aberration and promotes a spirit of manly loyalty. But the moment any authority is recognized as infallible, it becomes a dead weight on mind and heart, making all free motion impossible, producing hypocrisy and servility.

The essence of Christianity is a loving trust in the will of God, such a trust as was the mainspring of the life of the Founder, and has been ever since the great treasure of the Christian Church. The Christian trust is different from that which inspires other religions, because the life and teaching of the Founder stamped it deeply; and that stamp has persisted through all the ages, being ever reimpresed by an unseen spirit which flows down in a constant stream into visible organizations.

This spirit reveals itself alike to individuals and to

communities. It works in the intellect of the Church for the formation of doctrine, in the heart of the Church to inspire institutions of charity and of self-surrender, in the practical life of the Church to form a strong organization which may ward off from the inner life the blows of changing circumstance. But when the doctrine hardens into dogma, and is imposed by authority, the spirit leaves it and it becomes dead. When the institutions lose their first love and inspiration, they grow corrupt; when the outward organization becomes a soul-binding tyranny, it ceases to be really Christian, and falls to the level of mere secular despotism.

I believe that the coming of the Kingdom of God in the world is hindered by malign spiritual forces working in the minds and hearts of men. But I do not believe that all our modern progress in knowledge and in ideals is the work of these forces; rather it is a new and further revelation of the same God who spoke by Isaiah and Ezra, Socrates and Epictetus, Paul and Luther. If the Christian revelation is the fullest we possess, and if the Christian inspiration outshines all others, it is because its throne is in the very centre of the stream of life. Inspiration of a somewhat different kind comes through the intellect, through the working of the forces of society, through the stress of the spirit of nationality. And the results of the lesser inspiration have to be read in terms of the higher, if the Christian Church is to be in the future, as in the past, the city set upon a hill which cannot be hid, the salt without which society would soon sink in a hideous corruption.



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